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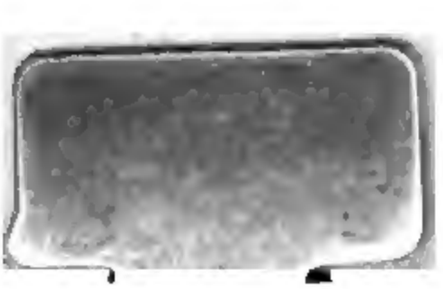

SERMONS

FOR

THE CHRISTIAN YEAR

BY THE LATE

REV. JOHN KEBLE,

AUTHOR OF "THE CHRISTIAN YEAR."

BIBLIOTHECA
DEC 1878
BODLEIANA.

SOLD BY

JAMES PARKER AND CO. OXFORD,

AND 377, STRAND, LONDON.

1878.

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SERMONS

FOR

THE SUNDAYS AFTER TRINITY

PART II.

SUNDAYS XIII—END.

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SERMON I.

THE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE AND LAUDABLE SERVICE.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Ps. cxxiii. 2.

"*Behold, even as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He have mercy upon us.*"

THE collect for this week teaches us to compare Christian obedience to Almighty God with the dutiful regard of a faithful servant to his master: calling that obedience *true and laudable service*, and praying that we may so faithfully *serve* Him in this life, that we fail not finally to attain His heavenly promises. The collect then answers particularly well to the short psalm from which the text is taken. Both of them agree in turning our minds to the condition and duty of servants towards their masters, as a sort of image or type, continually in sight, of the condition and duty of us all towards God Almighty. As God Himself asks by His prophet Malachi: "A ser-

vant honoureth his master: if then I be a Master, where is My fear?" Where among men is that dutiful reverence to the great Master and Governor of all, which all servants in all families are expected to pay to their earthly masters? And our Lord intimates the same in those many parables, in which He calls the Church or the world His family, Himself the householder, and us all His servants.

Now the first thing which strikes us here is, what earnest care the Almighty has taken to fill the whole world, and all our lives, with types and tokens of His dealings with us, such as that a careful reader or hearer of the Bible may everywhere see the lessons of that holy Book acted out as it were, and reflected, like the sun in water, from the surface of things around him. Wherever we see a master with a family of servants, we see a living parable of Almighty God and His Church, and out of their duties and behaviour to one another we may obtain much good instruction regarding our own behaviour towards Him. Perhaps it was more so in the old time, when servants were slaves, as we commonly call them, than now. For the word *slave* means one who absolutely belongs to another, even as we absolutely belong, body and soul, to our Maker and Redeemer. A slave in old time could not get away when he would from his master's household: just as we Christians were (so to speak) compelled to come in, brought into the kingdom of heaven, before we could give our own consent to it, and bound by its rules and laws, whether we will or no. In these respects a family of slaves might more exactly represent the Lord's household than a family of hired

servants does. Yet still a thoughtful master or mistress and dutiful servants are a lively image of what Christ is to us in His own Person and in His Holy Church, and on the other hand, of what we are to Christ, or ought to be, as holding certain places in His household.

For example, S. Paul says, "Servants, be subject to your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling:" and do we not know that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of all wisdom, and that the very description of the temper which suits the Gospel is, to 'have grace whereby to serve God in reverence and godly fear?' The respectfulness then of well-taught persons to those whom God has put over them as masters, may well put those to shame, who are used to think or speak lightly of heavenly things, or to behave in God's house and in His more immediate Presence, as if He were not there. And it seems worth observing, that these later times of the Church, in which it is but too plain how little respect is shewn to holy things, are also the very times in which, according to what we read in old books and hear from people of experience, servants appear to have fallen off in their sense of duty and reverence to their masters; as well as subjects to their kings, scholars to their teachers, the young to the old, and in general, inferiors to their superiors. The prophecies of the New Testament, our Lord's especially, would lead us to expect as much [a].

Again, S. Paul bids servants be obedient to their masters in *singleness of heart*: that is, that in setting about their work they should simply have an eye to

[a] *ἀνομία*

their master's service, and not rather to their own convenience and pleasure: and this again is the very thing so much commended in Christian people, that they should serve God in simplicity and godly sincerity: not as the hypocrites, whom our Lord so severely reproved, who fancied they were serving God while their hearts were far from Him.

Again, the same Apostle adds, that what we do for our masters should be done not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers: that is, we are not to have one way of doing our work when they are in sight, and another when they are out of sight: and this again is like the care which becomes all Christians, to make their conduct agree with their prayers, their week-days with their Sundays, their ordinary behaviour with their direct service of their Lord. Those who come before Him in His house of prayer, and seem to themselves to have good thoughts while they are there, and then go away and indulge themselves, until the next time of coming to Church, in dishonesty, lewdness, drunkenness, evil-speaking, or any other known sin: are they not rather like the servants, who mind and obey their master's bidding, so long as they feel that his eye is upon them, but when they fancy he is out of sight, presently they begin to please themselves? If that is not faithful service, neither is the other true devotion. If those servants would be counted wicked and slothful, surely these Christians will be asked, "Why call ye Me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Lastly whereas all manner of servants among men naturally and justly look onward to the time of receiving their wages: as a hireling, according to Job's

saying, seeketh the reward of his work: so we are instructed to look on to the recompence of our eternal reward: knowing, so S. Paul goes on, that "whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond, or free." Thus our Saviour mercifully instructs, and permits us to look on, unworthy as we are, to the rest and crown prepared in heaven for those who are the blessed of His Father: that thought is to be our strength in temptation, our support in the trials and troubles of this evil world. And here again we may be ashamed to reflect how small a portion of our thoughts is taken up by the hope of eternal joy, compared with what working persons think beforehand of the time when they will receive their wages. And O how much do we lose by it, even as to comfort in this present world!

In another Epistle, that to Titus, the same Apostle urges on a Christian Bishop, as a material part of his duty, to "exhort servants to be obedient to their own masters and to please them well in all things; not answering again, not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things." On which it may be observed, that as men expect of their servants not to answer them again, not to be too ready with excuses and arguments, when they are anyhow blamed, or when they are not exactly of the same mind with their masters: so a great point in the character of a good Christian is, that he should never trifle and tamper with his duty, nor be like those who, when they were called to the great Supper, began with one consent to make excuse: but rather that being called

by God's holy word, he should forthwith give up himself to obey His holy commandments: and being reproved by his conscience, should confess his fault at once, and not seek any cloke for his sin.

Again, says the Apostle, "Not purloining but shewing all good fidelity;" that is, never taking for themselves without leave any part of their master's property, or of their own time and labour, which is his property, so as to cause their work to be imperfectly done; never pilfering, though but in a trifle, nor idling, though it be but for a short time. All men know that such habits as these are inconsistent with the character of a good servant; and is it not equally plain, that to be careless about little things is inconsistent with the character of a good Christian? We have no right to purloin what is God's: we have no right to take what seem to us little liberties: the moment we perceive in our hearts that such and such a pursuit or amusement or companion is likely to encroach on what we owe to Almighty God, and make us more unfit to pray; much more, the moment we know it to be sinful, contrary in any respect to His holy law; that moment we are bound for Christ's sake either to turn from it altogether, or so to correct it, that it shall cease to be sinful and dangerous.

But all these qualities of a good servant are summed up in one word; Fidelity: or as it is described by the psalmist in the text, "his eyes wait upon the hand of his master." That is, he does not always wait for direct commands before he does what he knows his master would wish, but his eyes watch the very hand of his master: he observes every sign that he makes, every indication of his will and

opinion, and shews his dutifulness by acting accordingly. So the faithful and dutiful Christian, he who has true love and thankfulness to the Father and God of his whole life, he does not wait for express commands, but does what he sincerely thinks his Maker will be pleased with; as for example, the holy Mary of Bethany who anointed our Lord with the ointment, had no commandment to do so: neither had those pious women who came to His grave on Easter Day morning. It was love which brought them, no express command of His: and we know how great the blessing and encouragement they received: the one had a promise that wherever the Gospel should be preached, her name should be spoken of with honour; the others had the blessing of being the first to know of our Lord's Resurrection, and to see Him risen. Such was the favour shewn by Jesus Christ to that humble and dutiful love, which does not stay to be told in so many words, 'Do this,' and 'do that,' but looks to every turn of the beloved one's countenance; according to that of the Psalmist in another place: "I will inform thee and teach thee in the way in which thou shalt go, and I will guide thee with Mine Eye: Be ye not like to horse and mule, which have no understanding: whose mouths must be held with bit and bridle, lest they fall upon thee." Do not require to be guided as it were by force, but follow the guidance of Almighty God and His providence; be willing to take hints from Him; to do what you judge most likely to please Him, though you are not told it in so many words.

The Apostle S. Paul was a great instance of this

kind of loyal and dutiful mind. He was night and day considering how to please Jesus Christ and to do his very best for Christ's people. Thus when it was a question how he was to be maintained, although he might have been burthensome, as the Apostle of Christ, he chose rather to maintain himself by the work of his own hands. Not that he had any command from his Lord, but so he judged he was most likely to please Him, and to do his own work in the best manner. And it is the same throughout that great Apostle's character. He was ever considering and casting about in his mind for the *best* way of doing his Master's work. His eye was ever towards Christ's Hand, to see which way it directed him.

On the whole, it does not seem hard to understand the sort of mind which our heavenly Teacher would have us practise and pray for, when He recommends us to watch and imitate the earnest look of servants waiting for a sign from their master or mistress. It is a very patient as well as a very dutiful mind. It waits God's time, as constantly as it does God's will. It is patient, among other things, as to the full understanding of God's Truth. It does not require to be told the reason of everything. It receives the holy Sacraments with entire faith and devotion, knowing that there is in them far more than our eyes behold, or our hearts can imagine, and not restlessly longing to know exactly what. It listens to the Holy Scriptures, the dark parts as well as the easy, the histories that most startle and perplex, as well as those which carry us away with them: and rejoices to submit itself to all; having somewhat of the same feeling with regard to the truths of God, as holy

David expressed with regard to offerings made to Him. Such men love to offer their understanding, as well as their substance, to their God, in such a way as that it shall seem to cost them something.

So again, as to pleasing ourselves. God's true servants will never allow themselves to be led away, as to the manner of obeying Him, by their own fancies and desires. They will be very much on their guard, lest, whilst they are seeming to do their Saviour's work, they should in fact be only pleasing the world or themselves. They will not dream that all is right, if they are but kind to their brethren and glad to do them good. That part of Christian obedience is so delightful in itself, that it is very possible for persons to practise it from their hearts for its own sake, without looking beyond it, as they ought, to Him Who made it what it is. Christ's dutiful servants will therefore always endeavour to be very exact in those duties more especially, which cost them some pain and self-denial; like those first and best, who rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer stripes and shame for His Name.

Further: although, as I have said, a true, and faithful servant will look earnestly for the recompence of reward, he will not at all hurry on to it impatiently, or repine at its long delay. He will not depend too much on any satisfaction, even that which is truly spiritual, here in this present life: he will not expect *assurance* of salvation, or a present, sensible feeling of God's favour; a reasonable hope, and the answer of a good conscience will be immediate encouragement enough for him. If at any time he seem lifted up with a more exulting kind of cer-

tainty than this, he will mistrust himself, and pray to be kept always lowly.

Another point in which he will be very patient is the immediate visible fruit of his devout labours. He will not depend on any thing of that kind, knowing that the common condition of those who labour for God's kingdom is to cast their bread upon the waters, and not find it again until after many days. If he see that in spite of all he can do, those with whom God has trusted him, and whom he ought to amend, will not be amended by him; if they be nothing better, but rather grow worse; he will not marvel at the matter, nor be too much cast down; but will remember that his Divine Master for thirty years of His life on earth lay hid, and seemed to do nothing at all for His kingdom: that the cities were impenitent where most of His mighty works were done: and that when He was gone, the number of the names of all who believed in Him, and continued in Jerusalem together was only about one hundred and twenty. Who after this dare to complain or to hide his talent in a napkin, under pretence that his labours bear little fruit? Who would not rather, if he might choose, work patiently on, with a very little light, and let the Almighty choose His own time, and place of reward?

It will be a great help to this dutiful course, if we use ourselves early to be punctual and exact in the particulars of our duty, even though little and trifling in themselves; if we make good rules, and keep to them, not minding much whether they seem to work well or ill, so long as we are sure they are our duty: and if we cheerfully go on, even in disappointment

and seeming uselessness, thus serving God continually, making the most of our one talent. Such simple unwearied obedience, not asking questions, but performing duties, this is what He delights to honour; these are the persons who become as little children, whose only rule is that of simple obedience. To such as these the promises are made: their service is true, and laudable; they shall not fail finally to attain His heavenly promises.

SERMON II.

SPIRITUAL BLINDNESS AND SPIRITUAL SIGHT.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE x. 23.

"*Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye see.*"

'To be sure they were blessed, very blessed: they could not be otherwise: of course they must have been exceedingly blessed.' This, I suppose, is the answer which all our hearts make within themselves, when we hear our Lord declaring, as in the text, how great a happiness it was to be with Him in the Flesh: to see His Face, to hear His Voice, to watch His ways, to go about with Him, and mark His gracious dealings towards all those who came near Him, or whom He was pleased to visit. Imagine Him only during one day of His life; the day in which on His landing at Capernaum S. Matthew made Him a feast in his own house; think of Him mercifully discoursing with the Publicans and sinners: behold the distressed father, Jairus, how he falls at our Lord's feet and begs Him to come and heal his little daughter, for she was at the point of death: look at our Lord, how mercifully and lovingly He follows him, not at all minding the interruption: how, on the way, He permits the woman with

the issue of blood to come behind Him, and be healed in a moment on touching the hem of His garment: how sweetly He speaks to her and comforts her in her great confusion; how He stays the spirits of the mourning father, when the news was brought of the child's death: how He enters into the room where she lay dead, takes her by the hand, raises her up, and restores her to her parents: how even as He goes out, two blind men are brought unto Him, whom He restores to sight, touching their eyes; and presently after, a dumb man possessed with a devil, whom He also heals with a word. Only think what it must have been to have accompanied Him in that day's work; and then consider that that day was but one out of many. Every day, and wheresoever He went, those who were with Him saw Him working the same sort of divine and charitable works, and heard Him speak the same holy and saving words. Then, if it was good for men to be there, if one day in His company was better than a thousand, what must it have been to accompany Him every day! to wait upon Him all through the time of His mortal life. No tongue can speak worthily of it; and yet there is something to be said even more than this.

The disciples, perhaps, did not for a while know our Lord's Divine Nature: but when they did come to know it, how wonderfully, then, and how awefully, must the thought have come over them, that He in Whose company they had been, to Whom they had come so very near day after day, He was indeed the Most High God, the Almighty: and all His sayings and doings were the sayings and doings of God.

When we seriously reflect on this, my brethren, and in good earnest lay it to heart; I say, when we seriously think on it, and not only say it over in words; it is indeed most overpowering: and we are apt to fancy that it must have made the greatest difference to us, had we been so favoured. We are apt to think how good, how very good of course we should have been, supposing we had lived in our Saviour's time, and had seen His mighty works; the things which the prophets and kings of old so earnestly desired to see, but might not see them: the things which the very angels desire to look into. Many I daresay, feel no doubt, that if they had been with our Lord on earth, then they should have been converted and saved. They fancy like Herod, how it would be, if they could see some miracle done by Him.

But what is the fact? Alas, it is but too true, that the far greater number of those who saw Christ after the flesh did nevertheless continue unbelievers. The Pharisees looked on His miracles, and said, "He hath Beelzebub, and by the prince of the devils casteth He out devils." The wise men of the heathen looked on, and accounted it some subtle contrivance, which they called witchcraft. They saw the very same which the believers saw, but they saw it with different eyes: to them it was not the same: their eyes were not blessed. Heavenly and good and gracious as His works were, and exactly as they fulfilled the old prophecies, yet these stubborn people said, they knew not from whence He was. The blind man, blind from his birth, whom our Lord cured by sending him to wash in the pool of Siloam, thought this a

marvellous thing, that they knew not from whence He was, and yet He had opened his eyes. He, a simple true-hearted person, thought it strange there should be such perverseness in the world. But our Saviour Himself had warned His disciples of it repeatedly. He had warned them that not all eyes can see, although things be done never so plainly in their sight. In the unbelievers who were around Him, He said, was fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, "Seeing ye shall see," that is, ye shall see most clearly, "and shall not perceive." And for this cause He spake unto them in parables, because they seeing saw not. And it was a peculiar blessing to the few faithful ones, that their sight of Him was not in vain. "Blessed are your eyes, for they see; and your ears, for they hear." As though He should say, It is a great and a rare blessing: for the greater part of those who have eyes, do not really see what I do, nor Who I am that do it, though they be present all the while.

Our Redeemer then says plainly, that in His time, there were two ways of looking at Him and His works, and that the end of the two ways was very different. Some, like S. Peter, saw and believed: others, having eyes, saw not: just as in the bodily sight, it is a very common thing to cast one's eye upon an object, but not really to attend to it in one's mind: but as such beholding does us no good, so neither did the unbelievers' way of looking at our Saviour do their souls any good. And not only then, but in all times, the difference of faith and unbelief depends not on things being in sight or no, but on men's having eyes to see them, or no. There always have been, there always will be, two sorts of behold-

ers in the world, who looking towards the very same objects will see in them quite unlike, quite opposite things. Take, for example, the works of nature, as we call them: the sky and the sea, the hills and the valleys, trees and flowers, and all kinds of living creatures. There always have been, there always will be, some persons who merely look on the outside of all these, with wonder, or liking, or fear, or dislike, as it may happen: others who see in all of them some token of the God Who made them, and Who turns them all to the good of them that love Him. You understand at once, to which of the two it is said: "Blessed are your eyes, for they see." Blessed are the eyes which see in these common objects what the saints of God see in them: pledges of His love, signs and remembrances of the far greater and more glorious things which He has prepared in the other world. Blessed are the eyes which see in water the token and meaning of our new birth, and in meat and drink something to remind them of the Body and Blood of Christ sacrificed for us: which, when they fall upon foul and filthy objects, learn to have more and more horror and disgust at sin; and when they see things beautiful and charming, are lifted up towards the inward and spiritual loveliness of holy souls and of heavenly joys.

Again, our Lord seems to say, Blessed are the eyes which see the things that ye, My true disciples, see, in the services of the Church. We see and know something of the difference that there is between different persons in this respect. Unbelief, careless or scornful unbelief comes to Church, and what does she see? She just sees a room in which certain per-

sons come together at certain times, and stay so long, and hear or say such and such words; sitting, standing, or kneeling as the custom may be: and all, because it is the custom. This is what unbelievers see, when they come into a Church. But what of believers? What does faith see, she whose eyes our Lord declares "blessed?" Outwardly, and with the bodily sight, she sees the very same things, the same clergyman, the same congregation, the same building, the same Bible and Prayer-Book, the same Font and Altar: but very aweful, yet very lovely are the sights which she beholds with her inward and spiritual eye. The moment she comes in at the hallowed door, she beholds the Lord Jesus, with His holy Angels, waiting to bless her; and perhaps if any are behaving ill, faith discerns some zealous Angel frowning on those profane persons, and prepared to punish them if God stay not his arm. In Baptism she beholds our Lord Himself taking up the little children, laying His Hands upon them: whereas unbelief sees only a man in a surplice. And those who know their catechism know that extremely holy and sacred objects are present to the eye of faith in the blessed Communion, while others discern only a little bread and wine on an altar-table. In Confirmation, unbelief sees only the Bishop in his robes with his hand laid on the head of a person kneeling: but faith sees our Lord and Saviour blessing us, as He blessed His disciples that they might receive the Holy Ghost. And so it is all through: nothing so dull and dead and uninteresting as what the worldly unbelieving eye discerns in the Church and in what is done there: nothing so transporting both for

sweetness and glory, so like heaven on earth, as what the eye of faith discerns there.

Observe now the same kind of difference in men's ways of looking at the ordinary course of life: the *accidents*, as we are apt to call them, of every day. For example, God Almighty is even now most gracious unto us, in giving us in our great and pressing need a more than usually abundant harvest. Famine and starvation had come close to our doors, and we had nowhere on earth to turn to: we had no refuge, none to trust in, but only our good and merciful God: and He has heard our prayers, He has withdrawn His Hand, He has spared us when we deserved that punishment, and far worse. I trust there is not one among us, my brethren, man, woman, or even child, capable of considering, who does not from his heart feel something of God's mercy in this, and own that it is entirely His doing. Every one who has the least religion in him at all, must have eyes to see so far as that. But here lies the excellency, and the happiness of those whom our Saviour blesses, that they look up to Him, and see His Hand, in ordinary seasons as well as in this remarkable one; in all other matters as well as in our provision of bread: whereas unbelieving persons think only of the weather, the seasons, the turns of the times, the crops, the markets, and the like; and the God in Whose Hand their breath is, and in Whom are all their ways, they remember not. So in sickness, the one looks only at the physician, the medicine, the diet, the symptoms: another from beginning to end discerns in it the fatherly care and good providence of God. He *thinks*, I say, of God in all things: I do not

say that he always *speaks* of Him: but there is in his heart a deep reverential feeling of the power of his Father and the presence of his Saviour, wherever he goes, and whatever he is about. Blessed indeed are the eyes which see the things that he sees in all the common walks of life: an Almighty Friend and Guide ever at hand; angels waiting on him, the saints accompanying him with their earnest prayers and sympathies. And not the less blessed is he, (but rather the more so, because he is the safer,) for beholding also continual glimpses of the fearful end prepared for the wicked, and of the Evil one who goeth about, seeking whom he may devour.

This then is the great point; to see God in all our common and daily tasks and pursuits: to see Him with us: to recollect that we are not alone, and that all, whatever we do or suffer, and the whole world which surrounds us, is God's appointed instrument to bring us to Him. This is having eyes to see; all without this is a mere dream, just nothing and less than nothing.

It stands to reason, my brethren, that so great a blessing as seeing what the Saints see cannot be had lightly or for nothing, especially by such as we are, too many of us having trifled with it and slighted it, for many years. We know how hard it is for an unexperienced unskilful person to get an eye for the business of any art or trade. Take farming for example: a man that knows nothing about it, may go about the fields indeed, and look upon things with his eyes, but he cannot be said really to see half the things which are to be seen. He does not in truth see what a knowing labourer or farmer sees, though

his eyes rest outwardly upon the same objects. Or think of a builder's work, or of a carpenter's: we that know nothing of the trade may stand by in our ignorance, and watch what is going on: but how small a part of it can we really and truly see. Because the eye, as well as the hand, wants to be trained and educated to such things: it is not a power which comes naturally; it is a skill not to be learned in a moment. Till we are prepared in some measure, even in respect of these common and outward things, that is true of us which our Lord complained of in His disciples, "Having eyes, see ye not." How much more in respect of heavenly things! and therefore, how much more needful is it to begin early that blessed practice of discerning them everywhere around us! If young people had need be apprenticed early that they may become skilful in their art or trade, and see what it is needful for them to see; ought we not all of us to apprentice ourselves, so to speak, in our very young days to the only Master Who can train up our eyes to see the blessed and holy things around us?

Look at an ignorant unpractised person, when he is forced, as sometimes happens, to try what he can do in some difficult and dangerous work: how confused he is, how perplexed, how frightened, how wrongly he puts forth his strength, and after all, for the most part, how miserably he fails: and judge by that how it will be, when unprepared souls have to meet their God, unprepared eyes to look on death and judgement.

O Lord, before it is too late, open our eyes, that we may see.

SERMON III.

ALL CHRISTIANS CONCERNED IN THE GOOD SAMARITAN'S CHARGE TO THE HOST.

THIRTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. LUKE x. 35.

"Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee."

OUR Lord in the Gospel this day tells a history in which five different persons are concerned. First there is a poor man in distress; secondly, one who passes by and pays no regard at all to him; thirdly, another who passes by, and thinks of him a little, but does him no good at all; fourthly, the good Samaritan who not only notices him but does for him all that he can, all that the poor man needs; and fifthly, there is the Host or keeper of the Inn, to whose care the charitable Samaritan commits the poor traveller; as we read in the text, "On the morrow when he departed, he took out two-pence and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him: and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee." It is of this last, the host, or landlord, intrusted by the good Samaritan with the care of the traveller, it is of *him* especially

that I now wish to speak, and of the words which were spoken to him, for indeed we are all of us greatly concerned in those words. For Who is this good Samaritan but He Who came down from heaven to be our Saviour? That was His journey which He took, and He made Himself a Samaritan, that is, poor and despised, a scorn of men and an outcast of the people. And who is the poor man by the road side, but each one of us miserable sinners? Who the robbers, but those evil spirits who stripped our first father of his robe of righteousness, the Image of God in which he was created, and gave him the deadly wound of wilful sin? Who the priest and Levite, but the imperfect helps which God ordained for His people for a time in the Old Testament, which could only look at them and pass by, not having power really to deliver them? And thus the way was prepared for Him Who not only saw but had compassion: and not only had compassion but came unto us, became Emmanuel, and not only came unto us but bound up our wounds, pouring in oil and wine, healing our past sins and giving us grace, and not only tended us where we lay, but put us on His own beast, and took us like lost sheep on His shoulders, and brought us to an inn, His Church, His House of refuge, and is even now taking care of us there. The Samaritan in the parable came as it were by chance where the wounded traveller lay: but our Good Samaritan took the journey on purpose, He came along that road, the road of earthly trouble, the Highway of the Cross, because He knew that on either side of it the children of Adam were lying in their misery. And the Samaritan in the

parable made use of the inn which others had made ready for him on the road, but the true Samaritan Himself prepared the Inn to which He takes us for refuge, His holy Church, the house of sinners on their trial, till He come again and take them with Him to His own home, where He hath prepared a place for each one of them. Who then is the master of the inn? Those to whom He hath given the care of His Church: all Christians in their measure and place, but most especially Christian ministers. We who in one respect are as the poor traveller in the parable, in another respect are as the master of the inn. Sinners ourselves, redeemed, and brought into God's house, we are commanded to be continually shewing mercy on other sinners. Every brother whom God's providence puts in our way comes to us with our Lord's word, "Take care of him," 'I give thee something, fear not to spend it on him, or even more if need be:' and does not our brother come to us with our Lord's promise too, "Whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee?" Yes, surely he does: and this is the point which I desire especially now to consider. I wish that you and I and all Christians should regard each one himself as the host, to whom the good Samaritan brought the poor man, and should order his ways to his poor brethren accordingly.

We shall do so, if we will but trust in our Lord the great King of heaven, and earth, as we trust in one another on common occasions. You know what *credit* means, when people are transacting business. A man who is known or believed to have plenty of money takes out goods, or uses a man's

work, to a certain amount, and the workman, or owner of the goods allows him to do so, without making him pay for it at the time. Why? Because he has credit in him: he believes that the other has wherewith to pay, and thinks himself quite certain to have his money after a time. Now, this credit which we give one another in trade and bargains is really a kind of faith, a type and shadow of the faith which pleases God, and brings Christians to heaven. The faith which pleases God is, when we have such entire trust in what He tells us, that we act as if we saw and felt it, though it is out of sight and beyond experience. And so whoever sells any thing without receiving the price in hand has so far faith in the buyer. Thus the Good Samaritan required the master of the inn to have *faith* in him, to wait on the sick man, and to lay out money on him, fully expecting to be paid bye and bye. "When I come again, I will repay thee:" that was his promise, and the master of the inn counted it no doubt as good as money. If he had not, if he had said, 'No, I can do nothing, I cannot afford to be at any uncertainty, if you want me to wait on this poor man, you must pay me at once,' it would be very plain that he had no faith in the Samaritan, who might very justly have been affronted with him. Take care then what you say in your hearts, when your Lord comes to you with any of His poor and needy. Do not mistrust Jesus Christ, do not affront Him. Whoever they are that want your aid, they resemble that wounded traveller in this respect, they too were once lying helpless, spiritually lost, stript and wounded and half dead: and now He asks your aid:

some kindness or other there is, which He would have you do for them, either for their bodies or for their souls. He might have waited on them entirely by Himself, but His will was, to employ you in that work, as the Samaritan, having placed the worn-out traveller on his own beast, did not convey him at the time all the way home, but was content to leave him to be looked after in the inn. So hath He ordered our condition altogether, both in earthly and in spiritual things: we must be nursed, carried, fed, dressed, educated, helped in many ways by our fellow-creatures; we must all wait, and be waited on: it is the very condition of life. Especially you know that the greatest gifts of all, the Holy Spirit in Baptism, and the Body and Blood of Christ in Holy Communion, are not to be obtained but by the help of men. For the more charity, He willeth us to depend on each other: if we either grudge helping our brother, or are too proud to be helped by him, we break one of the chiefest bonds which unite Christians one amongst another and all to Jesus Christ.

Again; our good Lord might have required of us to wait upon our brother out of mere gratitude, without promising any reward to us; but it hath pleased Him to promise a reward. Suppose that host in the parable had himself been a traveller before, and had been robbed and wounded and relieved and cared for by the very same Samaritan: he would hardly have needed the encouragement of a promise, "I will repay thee," to make him kind to this new traveller: and so much the more bountiful would he think it, when his gracious Lord vouchsafed so to

encourage him. Now this, I need not tell you, is just our case. When God's providence sends us a sick or poor, an ignorant or helpless or sinful brother to look after, how sad it is that we should ever forget that we too, whoever we are, have been just as these are now, and have needed to be waited on ourselves. O, surely, it ought to be a joy and honour to us, when He permits us to do good, spiritual good, to any one whatever. It is the least we can do, to shew ourselves thankful: to be wilfully wanting in it would be quite intolerable: as our Lord signifies in another parable. "Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee?" Nevertheless, so earnestly does our heavenly Father long to see His children helping one another, that He hath assured us of an eternal recompence for this plain and simple duty. Thou hast given one of these little ones a cup, it may be, of cold water, "Verily," Christ saith of such an one, "he shall in no wise lose his reward."

Now mark another instance of overflowing bounty. He accompanies His aid with a gift. The Samaritan before he departed took out two pence, and gave them to the host, saying "Take care of him." He might for the time have required the host to trust him, seeing he was himself well known (so it seems) and respected upon the road: but he left something for an earnest, and pledged himself to pay the rest. He took out two pence and gave. Ancient writers say that these two pence mean the two great laws of charity; to love God with all your heart, and your neighbour as yourself. They are God's treasure, with which He furnishes us, pouring the true

love of Him and of our neighbour into our hearts by His Holy Spirit; whereby we are made able and willing to do His work; and they are as it were His coin, for they have His mark upon them, they are stamped with His image and superscription.

See then how inexcusable we are, we Christians, we to whom the Son of God has come, and has made us members of Himself; see how entirely we are without excuse, if we grudge any kindness to another. Suppose the master of that inn had churlishly refused to take care of the stranger, except just as far as the two pence would go, what would be thought of his courtesy or respect for the Good Samaritan? Much more may one ask, What are we to think of ourselves, what do the holy angels think of us, if we refuse His precious gift, the love of God and our neighbour which He offers to shed abroad in our hearts by His Spirit, and churlishly say, 'It is too much, we cannot be always shewing kindness, such and such things we are willing to do, but more we will not endeavour, though it is in our power.' That is as much as to say, we do not really love either our God or the souls with whom He has entrusted us, (for true love goes on doing good to the beloved, as long as there is any good to be done) however we are willing for other reasons to wait upon him to a certain extent, but we cannot think of doing any more. Is this an uncommon case? Alas, No! Too surely the great care of many in respect of those who want their aid is, to get off with as little expence of money, trouble, time, as ever they can in decency. Even parents, having grown up in selfishness, not having learned to love Christ, nor to care for their

own souls, grudge the love and care which they should have for their children's souls. Christ puts the little ones into their arms; He says, Take care of him, of his soul especially, and whatsoever thou doest more than common, in whatever respect thou puttest thyself out of the way, to make this little one a good Christian, grudge it not, I will repay thee, when I come this way again; when parents and children shall stand together before Me, and shall give account how one has loved another. This is our Lord's promise. What now is the common practice of too many calling themselves Christians? Is it not as if they thought it a clear gain, when they can find an excuse for not taking trouble to make their children good? The less they are forced to look after them, the better they seem to be pleased.

No wonder, if the like selfishness prevail to hinder people's doing good to those who are not so near to them, as for instance, when there is sickness; we are very often sadly reminded of the little faith men have in the Good Samaritan. Instead of being glad to take care of their sick and distressed neighbours, and rejoicing to spend and be spent for them, we hear Christian men and women making all manner of excuses why they should not do this or that, which it is very plain they might do if they would. Why? Because they do not in their hearts believe that when our Good Samaritan comes this way again, He will surely repay them whatever they shall have spent upon the afflicted more than what was absolutely necessary. He will repay them, and that in His own way: in the bountiful way of the King of all kings, Who, for our earthly things, offereth heavenly, for

our temporal things, eternal. He hath promised to repay a thousand fold every offering of true love —but as for us, can it be that we do indeed believe Him? So cold as we commonly are in works of that kind, so apt to ask, What do other people do? why should I do more than they? And again when we are prevailed on to put our hands to any work of charity, how strong is the temptation to leave off if we see no present fruit, if we find no return of gratitude? Whereas true love, faith in the Good Samaritan would make us say with the great Apostle, "I will very gladly spend, and be spent for you: though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." O, it is very humbling, very distressing, to see in others and feel in ourselves, how little faith we really have, and yet we all know we cannot be saved without faith. Surely there is reason to fear that very many Christians bye and bye will be condemned by the self-denying charity of others who never knew the name of Christ; barbarous people, who shew no little kindness, while those who should know better, those who call and think themselves true believers, stand bargaining, and will not wait on the afflicted, until they know what they are to get for it.

"What they are to get for it?" Why the Gospel of Christ tells them most plainly, if they would believe it. There is no man that hath really given up anything for the sake of Jesus Christ, there is no man that hath given to one of these little ones but a cup of cold water only in the Name of Jesus Christ, but it is written of that man, nay, it is sworn concerning him by the Mouth of Him that cannot lie,

"Verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."

One thing more I have to say. It is not only in waiting on our brethren that we are apt to shew this want of faith, this disposition to get off as easily as we can, but in every part of our duty also, in every thing which our Lord expects of us. In prayer, in attendance at Church and Sacraments, in the work of our calling, in the care of our time, in weaning ourselves from worldly and bodily delights, we are sorely tempted to contrive how we may get off as easily as we can. The consequence of which, very often, we have too much reason to fear, will be that men will not "get off" at all, but will lose themselves for ever. For our own sake and for Christ's sake, O let us try and pray to have better minds. Let us grudge nothing that we can do or suffer, either for our Saviour or for His members. He that shall walk most courageously by this rule, will surely find at the last that he has been most of all bountiful to himself. To him the joyful word shall be spoken, "Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

SERMON IV.

THE FLESH AND THE SPIRIT.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

GAL. v. 17.

"The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: . . . . . so that ye cannot do the things that ye would."

THERE is a common mistake regarding this and other like places of Holy Scripture which all Christians would do well to be on their guard against. It is thought that human nature is so wholly weakened and perverted by the fall of our first parents, that we are, now, all of us, under a kind of necessity of sinning: that it is not the fault of one's own will: that the good which we would we do not, and the evil which we would not, that we do. In short, our sins are made out to be all frailty and infirmity. We fancy we cannot help them, and so that God will not punish them. Thus too many go on, sinning one day and repenting the next, or at least seeming to themselves to repent, until their time of trial is over. 'What should we do?' people say: 'we are but poor frail men: we must sin sometimes; it is all very well talking about perfection; but every man has

his fault: the just man sinneth seven times a day: and so it must be with all of us.' Thus they go on, and encourage themselves and others sometimes in actual sin, always in very light and insufficient repentance.

Now it is quite true that one cannot help sins of infirmity. Those even who have been exercised for years in pure thoughts and high intentions, and have truly tried to keep the commandments, are yet continually sinning, so far as this: that they do, in hastiness or in error, something or other which they ought not to do, and still oftener leave undone something which they ought to have done. So far, they sin, more or less: but they do not *allow* themselves in sin. They look after it, grieve when they find it; watch and pray, that they fall not into it again. They do not submit to it, as a matter of course: they are truly ashamed of it, and feel that they cannot be quite happy until they have got rid of it. They pray constantly with the Psalmist, "O cleanse Thou me from my secret faults." *That* is a work, which by God's grace they hope may be daily going on within them: but as to presumptuous sins, those deadly and wasteful doings, which shut a man altogether out of his heavenly inheritance:—from those, however it may have been with them in times past, they hope to be kept once and for ever hereafter. You perceive at once how different this state of mind is from theirs who think to excuse themselves for known bad habits, such as swearing, or violent anger, under pretence of their own infirmity, and of its being impossible to be perfect. A man shall have lived, it may be, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty, years in the world, and all that

time shall have gone on using the same profane words on all occasions, taking God's Name in vain as he used to do in his youth: and yet, when he comes to think of preparing for death, he shall feel scarce any shame or horror at this his wilful sin of so long standing: for why? 'it is human frailty,' he says; 'and no man, we know, can be perfect.' Another may in like manner have spent a long life giving way to some kind of intemperance, knowingly eating or drinking too much, it may be, every day of his life: not without many a misgiving, many a good intention, but breaking, alas, his good purposes as soon as they are made: so that his goodness, as the prophet says, is much like the morning dew, coming regularly, and quickly passing away: and yet he will think to shelter himself, and to escape all need of deep and bitter repentance, under this saying, that all have sinned, all are prone to evil from their youth: he has wished to do right, but he could not do the things that he would.

And so men's repentance is effectually hindered, and the Evil spirit, it is to be feared, has his own way with them.

My brethren, we have all need to watch and pray against this great evil: and that we may do so the more effectually, let us learn from Scripture wherein our true weakness lies, and how far it goes towards excusing our errors: for that we are indeed desperately, pitiably weak, every hour's experience proves. Let us look, for example, at the epistle for this day. There we are warned that in all men, even the regenerate, there are two principles: the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit fighting against the

flesh: the one quite contrary to the other: each desiring what the other avoids, and avoiding what it desires: so that, as the Apostle adds, you cannot do the things that ye would. E. g., the flesh says, Indulge yourself in sloth: the spirit says, 'Awake, and say your prayers as well as you can:' the flesh says, "Eat and drink, for to-morrow we die;" the spirit says, "Keep under your body and bring it into subjection:" the flesh says 'Labour to be rich:' the spirit says, "Lay up treasures in Heaven:" and so all through all parts of our life; there is more or less of opposition, struggle, agony: nature craving one thing and grace another: nature clinging to earth, grace springing up towards Heaven. We cannot then do the things that we would: no man, good or bad, can be altogether at peace, all of him with his whole self. Those who seem to be so, depend upon it, have more or less of a struggle and agony within them. Whichever way we go on, there is something to pull us the other way; some parts of our mind and conduct will disagree with other parts: there will be things, good or bad, which we shall choose with one side of our minds and refuse with the other. The most intemperate has misgivings: the king of Babylon in his profane drunkenness was troubled and his knees knocked one against another, when he saw the hand-writing on the wall. The proudest and most tyrannical is now and then a little inclined to relent and abase himself, like Pharaoh, before his heart was finally hardened. And on the other hand, the very purest in this world has, or has had irregular motions at times: the flesh lusting against the spirit, and making

itself felt, and carrying one away with a kind of consent to evil thoughts before one is aware: the gentlest is sometimes moved towards anger, the sweetest towards discontent and fretfulness. Between the two extremes, of entire badness in any kind and complete established goodness, lie the ordinary sort of persons, wavering this way and that; more or less unstable in all their ways. So that in every case whatever, good bad and indifferent, people are unable to do exactly the things that they would. God's will is to try them for a while in this imperfect irregular state, which nevertheless they must do their best to mend: much in the same way as it is His will to try us all by imperfect bodily health. No one, as long as he is alive, is so ill but he might be worse; there is still a kind of fight between the disease and the living powers within him: and on the contrary, the highest health is not without some hidden seed of disease, whose nature is, as far as it goes, to cause infirmity, pain, or unsoundness. So that neither in body nor in soul is any one of the children of Adam able to do exactly the thing that he would.

This is part of the effect of Adam's sin, the heavy yoke pressing upon all the children of Adam. One reason, no doubt, why God has permitted us so to suffer, is to make us humble and resigned. Finding such painful anxieties and agonies encompassing us on every side, we cannot but feel that we have nothing good of our own: we are even forced to lean as children upon Him, Whose will is never to let us go for a single moment, except we force Him. This, no doubt, is part of God's reasons for allowing

us to go on in such an imperfect state: but whatever the reason be, the fact is certain. We know it by the teaching of God, we know it by our own sad experience, day by day, and hour by hour, that we cannot do the things that we would: evil and good will be always more or less warring within us. It is a sad truth; and we must not pass it by, but bear it in mind continually, that we may make such use of it as He intends. Just as a person in a doubtful state of health had better know that there is something the matter with him, that he may order his diet and other things accordingly, so we, being in a state of inward warfare and disquiet, must use all proper discipline.

E. g., it must be well for us every morning to remember that we have that day a fight to go through, a combat to maintain against such and such a sin, whatever it be which is likely to tempt us most. A good soldier starts up the moment his hour of waking comes, and his thoughts are presently upon his duty, where the enemy is likely to attack, and how he may best guard against him. He does not spend the precious time in dreaming about amusements, or in wishing all was safe and quiet; no more should we Christians, knowing as we do, that our time of rest is not yet come.

And in all changes, whether for good or for evil, still we must expect to find more or less of this inward opposition and warfare. If ever, by God's mercy, we seem to have really improved, and to be better able to resist temptation than we were, let us not be lifted up, nor think that all danger is over, the battle fairly won, and that all is victory and

peace: but let us take it for a certain thing that the evil spark yet remains in us: and let us not be high-minded, but fear. If on the other hand, we are unhappily obliged to confess that we have gone backward and lost ground, well may we fear and tremble, and judge and punish ourselves, as in God's aweful Presence: yet even so we must not despond: it is no new thing which has happened into us, no sign that we ourselves are specially given over to a reprobate mind: but it is what was sure to happen, what always will happen, if men do not watch and pray always.

I say, we must pray as well as watch against this infirmity of our nature; we must especially remember it in our prayers. There, indeed, it especially appears; there is no one thing which more plainly shews the flesh and Spirit lusting one against another, than our finding it so hard as we do to say our prayers to God attentively. We kneel down and in some sort try to pray: then comes a cross wind of strange wandering imaginations, and blows away all our good meaning almost before we are aware: the spirit tries to attend, the flesh, the natural man, drags us down. What can we do? We must pray against this evil beforehand: we must consider before we kneel down that it is God to Whom we are to speak, and beg of Him not to suffer us to forget Him, till we come to the end of our prayer. And again, we must examine ourselves after we have prayed, whether we were distracted or no, and whether it was our own fault. And so in all other temptations; it is well, generally speaking, not to let them pass away as in a dream, but to try and judge ourselves

afterwards according to what we can remember of our own behaviour: and if we find little of inward infirmity, to thank God without being lifted up; if we have failed, or hardly got the better, then to be more humble and watchful.

No doubt, any sincere person who shall set about trying himself in this way will find enough to make him sorry and ashamed. Day after day, and week after week, and month after month, and year after year, he will end his self-examination with a bitter feeling, that he hardly knows where he is, whether he has not rather gone backwards than forwards. Far better for him so to feel, dreary and sad though it be, than to have his heart lifted up like the self-complacent Pharisee. Yet even such an earnest and tender spirit may stand in need of one or two warnings, and much more the ordinary sort of persons, when they come to be dissatisfied with themselves. If they did not set out in the first place with very lowly thoughts of themselves: if they have been fancying great things, and that they are the favoured persons to do them; then is there so much the more fear, lest when they are disappointed they should become peevish and desponding: peevish and fretful towards men, desponding in regard of God and themselves. Therefore I say, when you look into your own heart, make up your mind beforehand to find things greatly out of order, and humbly accept the mortification and shame of doing so; accept it as part of your deserved punishment, and let it not in any way hurt your temper; still as you go about the world, try to make yourself useful to others; to please your neighbour for his good to edification, even

though you have to carry about with you a very painful sense of evil yet unsubdued, old bad passions lurking in your heart, and too often making head against all your good ways and purposes. And do not despond, do not think that you are in the way to be an outcast, though the sense of your imperfection lie ever so grievous upon you. But still, while you humble yourself, be bold and steadfast in loving and serving God, and in trying to do all your duty. In this way you will turn the vexing and mortifying thought, the gnawing sense of your own imperfection, into an exercise of true contrition: it will do your soul much good. You will not know it yourself: contrite persons, I suppose, never do know their own contrition, still it will be there, and God in His good time will shew that He delights to honour it.

The opposite fault however, is far more common: as I need scarcely tell you. It is far more common for men to take their own inward struggles lightly, as a mere matter of course, than to think too sadly and deeply of them. If they have been in a passion at any time during the day; if they have used profane words; if they have not presently withdrawn their eyes from things which they ought not to look at: yet they are not troubled at it; they say to themselves, 'We are fallen beings and such frailties must needs be expected of us: it is well it is no worse.' O beware of this way of thinking: beware of so dealing with your own backslidings. Do not allow yourself to think it a small matter, that you go on so long with the same evil passions to subdue, the same bad habits trying hard to lead you away captive to the law of sin which is in your members If you were passionate last year, and ashamed of it,

and are this year passionate again, and only just ashamed of it now: be not contented to go on in such a condition: pray earnestly, strive heartily, to obtain of the meek Lamb of God grace to be meek and gentle as He was. Of course you will find that you cannot at once do the thing that you would: the flesh, the old Adam, will cling close: you will not soon entirely disengage yourself from him: but you may depend upon this, that where there is a will, there is a way: the Holy Spirit, given you in Baptism, will prove stronger than the evil corrupting spirit, and will in the end help you to do the very things that you would, though not in this world, not till you are finally delivered.

Observe yourself well, and take care that you are on God's side, in the very next trial and struggle that may happen between your flesh and your spirit. It may be about a small matter: it may seem in itself trifling; but remember the bending of a very small twig, which may seem of no consequence in itself, one way or the other, may make all the difference to the shape of the future oak, when it shall have grown large: and so your behaviour or mine, in the next matter in which God tries us, be it great or small in itself, may give a shape and a turn to our being through all eternity. Surely that mercy is exceeding great, we can never adore and love it enough, which, for some short trouble here, offers us our God and Saviour Himself to be our exceeding great reward: and makes the unquiet warfare between the flesh and the spirit here a means and help towards perfect peace in heaven. For there the flesh will be no more contrary to the spirit, but both will serve God continually with all their best.

SERMON V.

THE RULE OF THE SPIRIT.

FOURTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

GAL. v. 25.

"*If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.*"

IF we saw a number of persons fancying that they were very weak and ill, and that they could not without a great deal of help accomplish some piece of work which we knew was of great consequence, what should we do? Should we not, if possible, persuade them to think better of it, and for once fairly to try their own strength, instead of arguing and complaining and encouraging one another in idleness, or in other things which were nothing to the purpose? Should we not say, 'Only put out your strength: you think the load too great for you, but only use such and such helps, which Providence has put within your reach, and see if you cannot carry it in reasonable time to the place appointed?' Well, this is just what the holy Apostle had to say to the Galatians, with whom he expostulates in the epistle which we read just now. Many of the Galatians would have it, that the Gospel of Christ which they had re-

ceived, and the grace of Christ into which they had been baptized, was not enough to make them good and enable them to please God by leading holy lives, but that they must be circumcised also, and keep all the rules which God had ordained by Moses for His first people Israel; they had got the substance, and they were for going back to the shadow: like an idle child at school, that can do a hard lesson, and still, in order to save itself trouble, loiters and lingers about an easy one. But S. Paul will by no means allow this, he speaks out against it with all his might, more earnestly, more passionately almost, than he speaks in any other of his epistles against the faults of those to whom he was writing. He seems to say, 'How can you be so fond of going back to an imperfect state, of making yourself out to be further from God than you are?' Alas, it is but too plain you want an excuse for indulging your natural tempers: when the good Spirit had come to you, and was ready to make you all love and charity, you would not altogether receive Him, you still gave way to your natural inclinations to be vain-glorious, provoking, envying one another, nay worse, to be biting and devouring one another; and others of you, perhaps, to be indulging in sensual lusts: for all this you want more or less allowance to be made, as if you could not help it, as if it were excusable from your being still in an imperfect state, under the law. So you would fain believe; but I, says the holy Apostle, I tell you plainly, and what I tell you is not of man, neither by man, but of Jesus Christ and God the Father Who raised Him from the dead, I tell you plainly that you are altogether wrong: you

may not, you must not, go back to the old imperfect law: God has given you His Spirit, you have but to walk by that Spirit: He has supplied you abundantly with the means of overcoming the lusts of the flesh, and it is your own fault entirely if you go on fulfilling those lusts: you may not, you must not, you shall not do so: as Christians you claim to be in the Spirit; then you cannot be in the flesh also, for those two, the flesh and the Spirit, are contrary to one another, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would: you cannot reconcile and mix them together, you cannot, if you wish it ever so much, please yourself in both ways, now doing right and now wrong as you happen to fancy, and so do tolerably well at last. No, you must make your choice between them, and if you will make the right choice, if you will pray and strive, through God's grace, to be led by the Spirit, if you will sanctify and honour the Lord God in your hearts, reverently receiving His holy inspirations, listening when He speaks to your heart in silence, obeying His godly motions; I say, if you will thus permit yourselves to be led by the Spirit, you will soon find to your great blessing that you are not under the law. You will not be walking, as before your conversion, by a strict outward rule, and no more. "For he that hath the Spirit as he ought, quenches thereby every evil desire." What need hath he who is never even angry to be told, Thou shalt not kill? or he who never looketh on a woman to lust after her, what need hath he of the admonition, Thou shalt not commit adultery? Who would discourse about the fruits of wickedness with him who had plucked up the root itself? When you are

under the gentle inward influence of the Holy Comforter, the Spirit of God and of Christ, penetrating deeply and thoroughly into every corner of your heart, softening all your passions and feelings, pervading every part of your character and conduct, when your soul lives by the Spirit, as your body lives by the air it breathes, then you will not need the very words of a commandment, you will not require texts to be quoted by chapter and verse, in order to keep you from wrong things and encourage you in duties: the works of the flesh, and the fruits of the Spirit, such as the Apostle here enumerates, will of themselves become manifest unto you; a holy and blessed instinct will guide you to cherish the one and shrink from the other. He, e. g. who has the Spirit of love will know and feel without being reminded in words, not only that he must not kill, but that he must be no striker, no scorner, no railer, he must not let the sun go down upon his wrath, he must refrain from what S. Paul mentions here, "hatreds, variances, emulations, wraths, strifes, seditions, heresies, envyings," and the like of these, as being of the same kind as "murders:" and he who has the Spirit of purity will draw back not from adultery only and fornication, but from even the least approach to uncleanness and lasciviousness, and of course also from drunkenness and revellings. So these two commandments, the sixth and the seventh, relate the instances given by the Apostle, how the Spirit having entered into a man and being willingly obeyed by him will keep him from all that is wrong and help him to all that is right: "[a] love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness,

[a] Gal. v. 22.

goodness, faith, meekness, temperance," whether there be or be not an express law in each case. And so it cometh to pass, that they who are led by the Spirit—observe, he does not say, "who have received the Spirit," but "who are led by the Spirit," who follow His gracious leading—are no longer under the law; they are no longer under its yoke, for although they keep it, and are bound to keep it, they do so freely and willingly; the very service is to them perfect freedom; it is that liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and in which His Apostle so earnestly exhorts us to stand fast.

Now we all, Christian brethren, inasmuch as we call ourselves Christians, suppose ourselves to be living by the Spirit, to be partakers, by the Holy Ghost, of the true life which is in Christ. We say in the Catechism that when we were christened we were made members of Christ, joined to Christ who is our Life: and that could only be by the working of the Holy Spirit, for He is the Lord and Giver of Life. We all profess that we live in the Spirit: observe then what the same Spirit Himself tells us by the holy Apostle: "If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit." Before, he said, "Ye must be *led by* the Spirit;" here it is, "Let us walk in the Spirit." To be led by the Spirit, means, as I said, to suffer the good Spirit to guide us: to walk in the Spirit means that we should be very circumspect punctual and exact in making use of His guidance. That is the precise meaning of the word "walk" in this text: it signifies not merely going on, but "walking orderly," going by rule and line. It is the same word which was addressed to S. Paul on a

certain occasion in the Acts of the Apostles: "Thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the law." It implies that kind of careful proceeding which a person practises when he is endeavouring to tread in the very footsteps of another: as Abraham, we read, is the spiritual father of them who *walk*, (i. e, walk carefully and serupulously,) in the steps of that faith whereby he was justified. Do you not at once feel, how very attentively and anxiously a person must (as it were) pick his way, if he goes on trying to tread just where another had trodden before him? He must not look about him, he must mind little or nothing else. Now if we would please God, it must be exactly so that we order *our* way through the world: all measuring our paces by the same rule, all minding the same thing, all endeavouring to set our feet exactly in the same track; the track of our Lord Jesus Christ. Let us consider these two things, and let us compare them with our own ways and doings. We are told first, that God would have us live by rule, secondly, that our rule must be that of His Holy Spirit.

We must live by rule: it is quite a mistake, then, to trust to our own good feelings only, if we are not going on regularly by rules of goodness. We are but too apt to trust to something of this kind. We fancy we have good hearts, because we are from time to time lifted up by stories which we hear or read of noble and loving deeds, or because it stirs us deeply for the time, and makes us very sorrowful and indignant, when we are told of oppression and wrong, the innocent suffering, and the selfish and cruel enjoying themselves: or still more, because perhaps we can

remember times and circumstances in which we ourselves have really practised self-denial, and put by our own wishes for the good and comfort of others. We dwell on such bright spots in our memory, and flatter ourselves that all is well enough. Or more than this: you can perhaps look back upon a time when you seem to yourself to have been really converted to Christ, carried away by a strong current of devotional and penitential feeling, such as you never had experienced before, and even now, from time to time, you have returns of that good season, your heart is lifted up to your Saviour, and you are enabled to pray with great sweetness and comfort. Bless God for it, my brother, but be not tempted to put your trust in it. All is not of course right, though you have occasionally strong breathings of charity towards your brethren, and devotion towards your Saviour. Put your trust in nothing that you can do or suffer; depend, lean, rely on nothing but on Him: night and day think of Him, how infinitely near He is to you, how you are living by His Spirit, and then He will be sure to help you to walk by His Spirit. Even in a mere human family, and in respect of mere earthly affection, we do not count it perfect love, we are not at all satisfied with it, if it only shews itself now and then, if it comes and goes, if we discern it only (as the saying is) by fits and starts. A mother would not be reckoned a true loving devoted mother, if she cared intensely for her little ones one day, and the other day thought of something else, and left them to take care of themselves. If the feeling be deep and genuine, rooted in the heart, not only just stirring and touching it, it will be regular in its action, like the pulse which shews one to be in good health:

whereas a sudden fitful intermitting pulse, every one knows, is a sign of inward disorder. So it is in families, so it is in kingdoms, so it is in parishes, so it is in the ordering of a man's heart towards God. The king who cares for his people, the priest who really cares for his flock, they walk by rule, they go on orderly and steadily, they watch, as having to give account; but how can a man think to give account, if he keep no account? So then, if we care for our own souls as we ought, we too must watch over them, and that continually; we must walk orderly before our God, we must set ourselves rules, and try to keep them, and examine ourselves regularly, how we have kept and are keeping them. Be quite sure of this, that if you are not thus trying to live by rule you have no right to think that you are led by the Spirit. But how many of us are really making any endeavour of the kind?

If we are to be saved, we must live by rule, that is certain: and another thing which is certain is, the rule must be that of God's good Spirit, not the fashion of the day and of people around us, not the dream and invention of our own wayward hearts; but it must be the teaching of God in His Word and in His Church, brought home to *our* spirits by *His* Spirit. And this is a rule which goes through every thing: it follows us in all our secret and lonely doings, it winds itself down into the darkest corners of our hearts. Like the Spirit Whose rule it is, it is about our path and about our bed and spieth out all our ways: like the God Whose Word it is, "[b] it is quick and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword." Take notice, you that are inclined to rest on some

[b] Heb. iv. 12.

one part of your duty, which comes to you easier than the rest. What if one be leading a decent and moral life in respect of the seventh commandment, keeping himself from sensuality and riot, and from all temptation to it? It is well so far, and he ought to thank God and take courage; but he is not yet in the way of salvation, he is not yet walking orderly in the Spirit, unless he keep himself from those other works of the flesh which the Apostle also specifies —hatred, variance, wrath, strife, envyings, and the like, which are as much against the sixth commandment as the others against the seventh. And again, another may be going wrong—thousands, alas! do so, just in the opposite way, depending on mere good-nature, as the former on mere decency; saying and thinking he never did any one any harm, while in too many ways he hath permitted himself to be partaker with the adulterers. The rule of the Spirit is universal; it reaches through every moment of our lives, and comprehends all the ten commandments in their full Gospel meaning. It is "the mind of Christ" and the mind of Christ must be perfect. The pattern of it is the life of Christ, and in the life of Christ there could not be wanting any manner of thing that is good.

Do not say, 'The thing is impossible: none of us ever can be perfect, and it is no use setting about it. I will just let it alone, and be content if I can maintain a decent character, and turn out no worse than other men.' Do not, I beseech you, indulge yourself in this way of thinking. Truly none of us can be perfect; no, not in any one thing; we know that very well. And do you suppose that our Saviour

did not also know it? He, Who is Perfection itself, knew infinitely better than we can, how far, how very far, the best and holiest of us all falls short of what He created us to be: and yet His word is, "Be ye perfect as your Father which is in heaven is perfect: be merciful as your Father is merciful: purify yourselves even as He is pure." These are our Lord's own rules to every Christian man woman and child, to guide him in the daily course of his life: and what if they are, in a certain sense, impossible to be obeyed? It does not follow that we may leave off thinking about them. Commonly, when men work by a pattern, they do not expect to come up perfectly to the pattern, and yet who would think of saying it was useless to mind the pattern at all? The child that sets about writing from a copy has seldom any hope of quite equalling the copy, it is enough if he tries and tries to get as near it as he can. His writing improves, and the teacher is contented, and says he is a good child. So will our merciful Teacher, Who made Himself one of us so as to be touched with a feeling of all our infirmities; Who "knoweth whereof we are made, and remembereth that we are but dust," sinful dust and ashes. So will He bear with us His frail weak scholars, when He sees us really trying to keep His pure example in our own view: He will make every allowance for us: His merciful Intercession will obtain for us pardon for the faults we truly repent of, and acceptance for our sincere endeavours notwithstanding all their blemishes. All this, if we love Him with such dutiful love, as to try sincerely to be like Him; to follow His steps in good earnest.

Neither let any man imagine that a Christian life must be an irksome and disappointing life, because they who try to walk regularly by the Spirit find themselves of course every moment sadly failing and falling short. They rise in the morning, and on their knees bind themselves before God to serve Him faithfully that day, and watch against the sin which they know is most apt to tempt them: and after all, when the night comes, they have to lament on their knees, as on many nights before, how often and how inexcusably they have forgotten their good purpose; how very unlike the day has proved to what they meant and hoped it should be. And this, day after day, perhaps, every day of a long life. Is not that a weariness and a misery? Nay, my brethren, far from it: if we try faithfully to bear this and to do better for love and duty's sake, His good Spirit will pour more of His Love into our hearts, and *that* will sweeten even a whole life of such disappointment and humiliation. Yes, depend upon it, there is nothing so sweet and so safe as to be continually serving Christ, continually vexing and humbling ourselves that we are not serving Him better. It is the very secret of happiness in this life as described by one who surely was as happy, in the midst of all outward trials, as ever any was upon earth: "Brethren, I count not myself to have obtained: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus[c]."

[c] Phil. iii. 13, 14.

SERMON VI.

HEZEKIAH A PATTERN OF LAYING OUR TROUBLES BEFORE GOD.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

2 KINGS xix. 14.

"*And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the house of the Lord and spread it before the Lord.*"

YOU heard in the first lesson last Sunday evening the beginning of this history of good king Hezekiah; how in the midst of his good works and earnest endeavours for the reformation of God's fallen people, the wicked king of Assyria, Sennacherib, came up against him, with an overwhelming force, as if all the powers of Europe were to join themselves together, to subdue and ruin this our island: also you heard what cruel and insulting words the messengers of Sennacherib used, and that, in the hearing of Hezekiah's people, who were enough inclined to take alarm. And we know by our own feelings, how very much such affronting language adds to the distress, when people know that they are weak, and have not, humanly

speaking, any power to help themselves. And Hezekiah knew very well how weak he was, as he had shewn a little while before by making large offerings of silver and gold to the king of Assyria, to persuade him to retire.

This being so, the city of Jerusalem being greatly perplexed at the exceeding danger, and no human help at hand, the wicked and profane king of Assyria sends a letter to Hezekiah, speaking reproachfully of the God of Israel, as though He were no more able to deliver the Israelites, than the idols of the other nations had been able to defend them. Hezekiah receives this letter, and what does he do with it? He goes up into the house of the Lord, and spreads the letter before the Lord. Now here surely is a very remarkable picture, drawn for us by the Finger of God, in lines and colours which we can all of us easily discern and understand. Here are two great and famous kings, set one against another: the one, with all the power of the earth at his command, having destroyed and cut off, one after another, nations not a few, and fully persuaded that there is neither God nor man, no power in heaven or in earth, that can stand against him; one time destroying his fellow creatures by thousands, another time reproaching his Maker by his blasphemous letters. He, the Assyrian king with all his millions, is on the one side: and who is on the other? Just one quiet person, Hezekiah, on his knees in the temple before the Lord; in his hand the distressing letter which he has just received: his heart full of faith and prayer. This is the picture which the Holy Ghost sets before us at this time. How ought we to look

upon it? How may it help us to please God, and save our souls?

In the first place, I suppose that every one understands well enough how persons are driven in circumstances like those of Hezekiah to "spread the letter before the Lord." No doubt, in these times especially, when many, according to the prophet Daniel, are continually running "[a] to and fro;" when it is daily becoming more and more customary for persons to be separated from their near and dear friends, and to have no communication with them except by letter; no doubt, I say, that in these times many do receive letters, filling them with anxiety and fear and sadness about their own concerns, or about some one whom they are bound to care for: such letters, that men feel the only thing to be done is to spread them before the Lord, to refer the whole matter to Him in prayer. This we can easily understand: and it is well, very well, that Christians should thus have recourse, whether in bodily or in spiritual distress, to Him Who alone can help them. It is well, that when their friends are beyond their reach, and they feel that they can do nothing else for them, they should all the more earnestly plead for them before the Lord. It is done, I dare say, very often: but I could wish it done far oftener and more earnestly than it is. Too often, I fear, even religious people allow themselves to be cast into a kind of despair, when any bad news comes suddenly; some think it a point of affection to be so: but the truth is far otherwise. God never meant that Christians should in any case despair, or sorrow as others

[a] Daniel xii. 4.

that have no hope. He is our Father; and who is that father who would not desire his children to resort to him, when their troubles appear worst and most hopeless, with their natural cries of distress? What if the case be so far desperate, that the particular evil against which we desire to pray has already taken place, and cannot be undone? As, e. g. some dear friend at a distance has died, and we cannot pray for him to be restored to life again: or some plan on which we had set our hearts has finally and entirely failed, and must be given up altogether. Well, even so Hezekiah's example may be followed: the bereavement, the disappointment may be "spread before the Lord:" for Him nothing is too hard: He can find a remedy, He can make up for the evil, even when it is done and cannot itself be undone. Daniel many years after, prayed as Hezekiah did: in one sense it was too late, for Jerusalem was already destroyed: yet the prayer pleased God and obtained a great blessing.

But then, my brethren, let us carefully observe what manner of men they were, by whose example we are so much encouraged to bring our troubles and disappointments and spread them as it were before the Lord. They were not then seeking the Lord for the first time: both Daniel and Hezekiah were used long ago to run to Him in all sorrows and difficulties. Daniel's custom was to kneel on his knees in prayer three times a day, and so earnestly did he keep to this duty, that rather than omit it for one day, he was willing to be cast into the den of lions. And of good king Hezekiah we read, "[b] he trusted in

[b] 2 Kings xviii. 5, 6.

the Lord God of Israel; so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any that were before him. For he clave to the Lord, and departed not from following after Him, but kept His commandments." Therefore not only on this occasion, but whenever he was in trouble, he always knew what to do, he betook himself at once to the Lord. A short time before the letter came to him, which he took and spread before the Lord, he had had a most insulting message, by word of mouth, from the same enemy. What did he then? "[c] He rent his clothes and covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the Lord." He came before God in His temple as an earnest penitent. When dangerous sickness came on him, still he sought no other helper. "[d] He turned his face towards the wall" (i. e. away from all the sights and sounds of the world), he tried to be as much alone as possible, "and prayed unto the Lord." Thus you see that prayer was Hezekiah's refuge, not now only, but constantly; whatever happened unto him, he was in the habit of resorting to his Father in Heaven, just as naturally as any child runs for shelter to its father or mother here on earth.

And now, do you not see at once what an useful and comfortable lesson we Christians, one and all, may learn from this account of the doings of good king Hezekiah? Hezekiah, when anything turned out amiss, when he was in danger, or ill-used, or received any bad tidings, was at no loss what to do, he knew at once where to go for comfort and aid: and so should we, if we were used to practise Hezekiah's

[c] 2 Kings xix. 1. [d] Is. xxxviii. 2.

rule, and think of everything that happens to us, good and evil, as coming from our God and Father. How many persons, if they were abused and railed at as the king of Assyria and Rabshakeh railed at Hezekiah, would forget themselves, lose their temper, begin abusing and railing in return! But the rule of this good king was, when he was reviled, not to revile again, but to commit himself to "[e] Him that judgeth righteously." It was Hezekiah's way; much more ought it to be our way, seeing we have the example of One infinitely greater and better than Hezekiah, Who for us "[f] gave His back to the smiters and His cheeks to them that plucked off the hair, Who hid not His Face from shame and spitting." But as Christ being never alone, because the Father was always with Him, knew how to bear it all, so is it with them that are Christ's: the Father is always with them, and they know it, and try to recollect it. Come what may, they always refer it to the good providence of Him Who has promised never to leave them nor forsake them. They say in their hearts, with old Eli, when the worst of calamities were coming on him, "[g] It is the Lord: let Him do what seemeth Him good."

No one of us knows how soon he may have occasion to practise this lesson. No one of us knows how soon some distressing letter, some heavy tidings may come suddenly upon him, and the only thing he can do with it will be, to go and spread it before the Lord; no relief, no consolation, but to betake himself to our Lord Jesus Christ, tell Him the whole grief, cast all the burden upon Him. If such a moment

[e] 1 S. Peter ii. 23. [f] Is. l. 6. [g] 1 Sam. iii. 18.

should come, and come it will, sooner or later, should we live any long time in the world, to every one of us; what a blessing will it prove, should we have been trained beforehand to seek the Lord constantly, to commit all to Him in regular prayer. You are a parent, we will suppose, or a friend, and some beloved child, some friend dearer than the apple of your eye, is gone far away out of your sight. He is out of your sight, out of your reach, you can do nothing but pray for him. Some news arrives, which distresses you or makes you anxious: presently you are on your knees for him: what a help, what a privilege at such a time to be conscious that you are not in the agony of the moment setting about something which you have never been used to before! you are not resorting in your extremity to an untried physician, but to Him Whose healing power you have known by happy experience all your life long unto this day.

But in order to have the fulness of the comfort, you must have begun early, you must have devoted to your Saviour the flower of your life, your youth and your high spirits. I do not say but the Almighty in His great mercy will hear the prayer of those who turn to Him, be it ever so late; and although it seem as if nothing but the present need had caused them to seek Him, just because they find help in nothing besides. He heard even Ahab, when he humbled himself before Him; and had Ahab been a true penitent, as Manasseh afterwards was, blessed indeed would have been that prayer, though it were perhaps the first real prayer which the poor man had ever offered: but much more blessed surely are

the prayers and intercessions of those, who wait not for separations and sore trials and afflicting calls of God's providence, but use themselves regularly at all times to spread their letters before the Lord; to bring all that happens to them for joy or for sorrow, into His peculiar Presence, that He may sanctify it and turn it to good: by prayer to put all in His Hands, and to leave it there by faith. Lose no time, I beseech you, my brethren, turn to Him in sunshine, and be sure He will be near you when you turn to Him in storm.

To this end it is of great consequence that you should use yourselves, *daily*, to mark His dealings with you. A thousand things are happening, every hour of our lives, in which, if our eyes were quite open, we should discern His wonderful providence, turning away evils and temptations from us, or helping us to endure or overcome them: and although it is of course impossible for us to mark all or the greater part of them, yet a few, each day, we *may* mark, if we are so inclined, either at the time when they happen, or at evening when we think over the day, as all earnest Christians ought, before we say our last prayers. I mean such things as these—that perhaps you may have been tempted in the course of the day to violent anger, or to evil speaking, or to indulgence of impure thought, and something has taken place just at the time, which has kept you from giving way to the sin. It seemed accidental, perhaps, but when you think it over at night, you see clearly that it was the good hand of your God upon you. Now I say, that any one who will use himself to look after such things as these, to give

thanks for them in his evening devotions, *that* man is in a good way for meeting any sudden trial as a Christian ought. When letters come to him with ill-news, he will have the comfort of spreading them before the Lord.

There is one thing more which must not be forgotten: when we are seeking God in evening prayer, we must think over our own sins as well as His mercies, our sins of the day past, one by one, as near as we can remember them. Tell Him your sins, and you may the more freely tell Him your sorrows. Do you not see how in all the Psalms these two are mingled together? "[h] My wickednesses are gone over my head, and are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear. I am brought into so great trouble and misery, that I go mourning all the day long." The more particular you are in confessing to Him whatever has been amiss in thought word and deed, so much the more confidently may you hope that He will hear and pity you, when you tell Him your troubles and anxieties, those even which to the ear of man might sound little and trifling, many of which however He knows, and the sufferers know, to be very real, and greatly to need relief.

Let no man woman or child say, 'How should He care for me? how should the great God of heaven and earth listen and bow down His Ear to such an ordinary matter as the daily troubles of a poor insignificant creature like me?' Nay, my brethren, to this end was He born, and for this cause came He into the world, that He should take on Himself these very infirmities, bear these very anxieties of yours.

[h] Ps. xxxviii. 4—6.

If He made Himself to be sin for us, as the [i] Scripture plainly says He did, much more did He not shrink from sympathizing with these earthly and providential calamities, which we endure as the punishment of our sins.

Neither say, 'He knows it already: it comes by His appointment: what is the use of our telling it to Him?' Of course, He does know our troubles already, for He knoweth all things. He knows our troubles as He knows our sins; but even as He would have us confess to Him the sins which He knows and hath already written down in His Book, so He as a loving Father would have His children come near to Him and relieve themselves by telling Him of the pain and sorrow which He Himself hath sent or permitted. His knowing it already, is no reason why we should not plead it before Him. If it were, there would be no such thing as Prayer, no confession of sins, no opening of our hearts to Him at all.

Moreover, it is very much to be observed, that Hezekiah did not only tell his troubles to the Lord, but that he also went into the Lord's House to do so. This is mentioned twice, very particularly. When he heard Rabshakeh's blasphemous message, "[k] he rent his clothes, and covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the Lord." And when he got Sennacherib's letter, he went into the House of the Lord, and *there* spread it before the Lord. Here surely is a great encouragement to Christian people to bring their burdens of fear and anguish, their troubles and distresses of every sort, to God's Church and to God's Altar: to offer them all to

[i] 2 Cor. v. 21. [k] 2 Kgs. xix. 1.

Him, as a kind of sacrifice, in union with the one prevailing Sacrifice in which we continually join as often as we come to Holy Communion. There is no consolation, depend upon it, in any trouble of mind body or estate, like that which may be found in laying it humbly and penitently at the Feet of our High Priest, when we by grace are joining in that Holy Commemorative Sacrifice of His own Body and Blood, which He is evermore offering for us in heaven. He will graciously accept and bless our troubles, as He did the troubles of His disciples at that first Communion, when He promised to send the Comforter.

One word more; one word of needful warning, and I have done. Scripture, as we have seen, plainly encourages us to think of God's providence as ordering all that happens to us, our lesser as well as our greater troubles, and to bring it all before Him in prayer and Communion. But Scripture nowhere encourages persons to talk familiarly, or make a show, of this their dutiful and comfortable way of devotion. Our Lord's will plainly is, that all should be done very quietly. All would be spoiled, were people to allow themselves, like the Pharisee in the parable, to be all the while praising themselves in their heart, or listening secretly after the praise of men. Only be on your guard against this snare, and you cannot be too earnest, too particular, in seeing the Lord's Hand in all that befalls you, and offering up all to Him. It is a way, which, if you really take it, is sure by His blessing to prove the way of peace here, and to bring you at last to a happy and Christian end.

SERMON VII.

HEZEKIAH A PATTERN OF LAYING OUR TROUBLES BEFORE GOD, IN HIS HOUSE.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

2 KINGS xix. 14.

"And Hezekiah received the letter of the hand of the messengers, and read it: and Hezekiah went up into the House of the Lord, and spread it before the Lord."

THE Sunday lesson this morning continues the history of Hezekiah, and tells us among other tokens of his piety, how in time of trouble he sought the Lord only. He did not call on any false god to help him, as the neighbouring nations were used to do, as his own father and too many of his people had done. He did not depend on his own skill, power or good fortune, so as not to call in any way upon any god at all. But he spread the letter before the Lord, as a matter of course, as a practice he was always familiar with; he referred the matter to his God, the God of Israel. And the answer was, what we all know: "[a] the angel of the Lord" that night "smote in the Camp of the Assyrians an hundred

[a] 2 Kgs. xix. 35.

fourscore and five thousand:" the tyrant then departed, and Jerusalem was safe and free.

Here then, as I tried to shew you this morning, we have the very greatest encouragement to spread our bad tidings before the Lord; to cast all our burden, all our care, upon Him, and to lead careful and holy lives, that when we turn to Him in sudden trials, we may not turn to Him unwillingly and in vain. But there is one point which I only just mentioned this morning of so great consequence, that I desire now to draw your attention to it again. It is this, that when Hezekiah spread the wicked letter before the Lord, he went into the temple to do so. He not only turned to God in his mind, but he went bodily into the house of God. Hezekiah might have said to himself, as I suppose many persons before now have done, and many do yet, 'What signifies *place* to God Almighty? He is about our path and about our bed, He can hear me as well when I am lying awake, or walking in the fields, or sitting by my fireside, as when I go to the place which is called His own.' But this was not Hezekiah's way. He did not so argue with himself. It was a comfort and satisfaction to him to go into the house of the Lord, and lay before Him the bad news which he had received, in the place where He Himself had promised to be. And plainly this was no offence, no superstition, in Hezekiah. The prayer which he made in that way received an immediate answer from God. The great prophet Isaiah had instructions to say to him in God's name, "[b] That which thou hast prayed to me against Sennacherib, king of Assyria, I have

[b] 2 Kgs. xix. 20.

heard." We have then great reason to believe, that this circumstance, of Hezekiah's coming into the temple there to offer his own special prayer, was a thing of which God approved, and that He would have us do the like. That is, God would have us Christians bring our special and particular prayers at His appointed times into His holy Church.

It must be what He approves, for it has always been the way of His saints. They knew, one and all of them, that God was with them in every place: yet they, one and all of them, had special, consecrated places, where they felt themselves to be with the Lord in an especial sense. Just as they knew that He was with them at all times, yet there were always certain times set apart in which they knew and felt Him to be specially present with them. Thus we read of Abraham, that on the day Sodom was destroyed, he "[c] gat up early in the morning to the place where he stood before the Lord." Thus Jacob resorted especially to the place where God appeared to him when he first fled from the face of Esau his brother: he called it the House of God, and in all his distress the thought of that place was a particular comfort to him. Thus Moses and Aaron were commanded to set up that glorious tabernacle, and thither to betake themselves, and there to assemble God's people, whenever in any danger or difficulty they wanted to take counsel of God. How often do we read of their falling on their faces, before the door of the tabernacle of the congregation, and of the glory of the Lord appearing to protect them, and tell them what to do, when the people were re-

[c] Gen. xix. 27.

bellious, and they were without human help. And David and Solomon, in after times, made it their very chief object in what they did for God's service, to provide a royal temple worthy of the heavenly King: and God gave a special blessing to their work: and as David taught the whole Church to love the [d] habitation of God's house, and the place where His honour dwelleth, and to long to see His [e] power and glory as he had seen it in the sanctuary, even when he was far off in the wilderness, "in a barren and dry land where no water is:" so Solomon by the Holy Ghost gave us instruction to worship toward the holy temple and the place where God hath said, "[f] My Name shall be there," even when we cannot worship in it. And so Daniel, as I reminded you last Sunday, even when he was in Babylon, prayed towards that quarter of the heavens where he knew Jerusalem to be, wishing himself there, wishing himself in the temple at the time of solemn service, though it was impossible for him, then, to be there in the body: just as any one of us might long to be taking part in the prayers and Sacraments of the Church, when kept away by sickness, or distance, or any other providential hindrance.

Thus you see that from beginning to end the saints of the Old Testament made very much of worshipping God in His own house; of going there to confess their sins, to tell Him their troubles, to ask His pardon and blessing. Nor was it otherwise in the New Testament. Our Lord Himself, as He did all things for our example, so He particularly recommended to us this way of bringing our troubles

[d] Ps. xxvi. 8. [e] Ps. lxiii. 2. [f] 1 Kgs. viii. 29.

before God in His own house, by that which is told of Him in the last week of His life. "[g] In the day time He was teaching in the temple; and in the night He abode in the mount called the mount of Olives." He divided His time between God's house and His private devotions. That was His way of preparing for His Agony and Bloody Sweat, His Cross and Passion. Are we not plainly to learn by it, that we too when we are preparing for our great and aweful change, or for any other of the many trials which our wise and great Father sees to be good for us, we too should do well to make much of God's house, to be there as constantly as we can, to bring all our anxieties, all our troubles, into His merciful Presence, and lay them before Him, as a child in its distress runs to the room where it is sure to find its parents, and is not satisfied till it has told them what is the matter? Surely our Lord's use of the temple may well encourage us to make this use of our Churches: the rather, as we find His Apostles doing the same: for after the Holy Spirit came down upon them, we read, they continued "[h] daily with one accord in the temple," and that, at a time when persecution was gathering round them. And S. Paul in the epistle to the Hebrews earnestly warns them "not to forsake the assembling of themselves together," but to practise it and encourage one another, not the less, but the more, as time went on, and they saw "[i] the day approaching," the great day, to which we must all come, and we know not how soon. According to the mind of S. Paul then, the older we grow, the nearer we come to our end, the more we

[g] S. Luke xxi. 37. [h] Acts ii. 46. [i] Heb. x. 25.

feel and fear of the trials and troubles of life, the more needful is it for us to wait diligently on God in His house, not only to call upon Him at home, but to bring our troubles and anxieties there, and lay them at His Feet, as the blind and the lame came to our Saviour in the temple, and He healed them.

And if you mark it, the Church Prayer-book is plainly meant, among its other uses, to help us in thus approaching God each one with his own private and personal cares, casting all our burden upon Him. Just think of the Litany, how it reckons up almost all sorts of affliction and anxiety, and puts words in our mouth, asking for deliverance from them, whether a man is troubled for his sins or for the miseries which sin has brought on him, and whatever kind of sin it is, carnal or spiritual, outward or secret; whatever evil is feared in Church or state, public or private; whatever blessings we most need, and whatever persons we are most called on to pray for, those who are set over us, those who are in trouble, those who have erred, those who have fallen or are in danger, the sick, the young children, the orphans, the fatherless, our friends and our enemies, all sorts and conditions of men—when we have joined, truly joined, in the Litany, we have really and truly prayed for all these. Is not this a great privilege, a great treasure put within our reach? Your friends, perhaps, are far away, on the other side of the world; or they are sick and you know not how to help them; they have become widows or orphans, their trouble is beyond your consolation; or worse still, they have fallen into serious sin, or they have erred and been

deceived as to the true way of worshipping God, and you cannot change their hearts nor enlighten their minds: but this one thing you may do, you may come to Church regularly and say the Litany for them with all your heart. Sunday after Sunday you may say for this one and for that one, 'Good Lord deliver him,' and for him specially you may say, 'we beseech Thee to hēar us, Goọd Lord;' and you may be quite sure that if you come not in wilful sin your loving intercession will be heard by Him Who has promised to be there, and to grant the petitions which Christians agree to ask of Him. Surely if you think a moment, you will see that this is a great and strong reason for our being as punctual as ever we can in the Litanies and other solemn intercessions of the Church. If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you must believe that our Lord is here, that He has pledged Himself to hear these prayers, that He is all in all to those for whom you would pray as well as to yourself: and if you have indeed any real love for them, how can you be content without commending them so effectually to His loving and Almighty care?

And the rest of the Prayer-book in this respect is exactly like the Litany. I need only just put you in mind how it brings before God one by one all the principal joys and sorrows of each person's life, and puts words in our mouths, whereby we may offer all as a free and acceptable sacrifice. For what is the Baptismal office, so far as the parents are concerned, but a dedication to Him Who gave it of that which is most precious in their eyes? What the Confirmation, but the young person himself uniting in the

same offering of his own soul and body? What is holy Matrimony, but the bringing to Him our best earthly hopes and blessings to be sanctified and made heavenly blessings? Then, because the sick cannot come to Church, order is taken nevertheless for their being in some sort partakers of the public Service, in that, as often as they or their friends desire, they may be prayed for by name, as among sick persons, or persons afflicted in body; and when they have obtained relief, then thanksgiving is offered for them especially, as you know in the case of Churching of women, which is an acknowledgment both of deliverance from exceeding danger, and of one of the greatest earthly blessings. The Commination or penitential service appointed for Ash Wednesday, if people would really think of it and carry it out, would assist us wonderfully in bringing our sins, one by one, before God: and as to the Burial service, we all feel how by it the bitterest affliction is soothed by being brought into Church and offered, as it were, to be sanctified by Him Who sent it because He knew how much we needed it.

Thus, you see, the Prayer-Book follows the practice of our Lord and His saints, in inviting us to the house of God to present before Him both our joys and our sorrows, both perhaps else too trying for us to bear, that they may be sanctified to our soul's good; and the feelings of all, who have any devotion in their hearts, does of itself lead them to Church, when they are once fairly frightened by any visitation of God's providence. Some of us no doubt remember how it was among us when these islands were last visited by that fearful disease, the cholera: how earnest, how

regular, the people then were in many places, in hastening to the Churches as often as ever they were open, Sundays and week days. The Church service seemed to them, then, something very true and real and affecting indeed. They were like Hezekiah, as though they had received threatening, alarming letters from the eternal world, they were alarmed in earnest, they hastened therefore in earnest to spread their letters before the Lord. And so no doubt it would be again: the Churches would be unusually full, the congregations unusually devout, if the same fearful disease were again to make head among us; as it might begin to do any day. But why, let me ask, should we wait for such a call? Have we not, each one of us, already received a threatening letter, a notice from Him Who can and will accomplish His own word, that it is appointed unto us very soon to die, and after that no more repentance, but only judgement? Have we not been told of that mortal disease of sin, how near it is to us, in our homes in our very hearts: how that "[k] lust when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death?" Yes, we have been told of these things, we have received these letters from our Lord by sure messengers; why then are we so slack to come here and spread them before Him? How is it that any Christian man can be comfortable or think himself safe, who is not in the way of coming to Church as punctually as he can, not only to give testimony of his faith, not only to keep up outward communion with his brethren, but for the inward health and safety of his own soul; to pour into his

[k] S. James i. 15.

gracious Lord's ear, by true confession, the sad history of the week, its sins and its cares; and to receive through His authorized ministers, and that most of all in the blessed Sacrament of Communion, absolution and remission of the sins, and comfort in the sorrows.

It is true, God is every where, and when persons wish to come here and cannot; no doubt He will graciously help them to Church blessings at home: but not if they stay away lightly, in carelessness, unbelief, or a worldly mind: not if in their hearts they secretly rejoice to have an excuse for spending their Sundays like heathens. Such persons have reason to fear that they may be left to themselves in trials and evil accidents. If they will not use themselves to seek the Lord, to cast their burdens constantly on Him, they must not wonder if bye and bye, when they do seek Him, He hide His face from them.

And what if many persons live at a distance, have large families, find it hard to get ready and the like? They may consider that such difficulties, which we all know are often very real and very considerable, do nevertheless make it a more blessed work for those who contrive to come in spite of them: thereby shewing somewhat of David's mind, when he said, "[1] I will not offer burnt offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing." Of course it is a very great trial, a very considerable part of Christian self-denial in working-people who live at a distance to come regularly to the house of God: but so much the greater will the joy be, when for that and the like self-denials the Judge and Saviour

[1] 2 Sam. xxiv. 24.

will say to them, "[m] Well done, good and faithful servant; . . enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

And since, as I said before, we should almost all of us, I suppose, manage to come, if any great calamity, such as the Plague, were around us, I beseech you let us bethink ourselves earnestly, do we not need it as much at all times? Consider how near we always are to death: how many things we do amiss and need absolution for, every day, much more every week: and that this absolution is solemnly given us in the Church. Surely we cannot well afford to go without it. O, depend upon it, when our last hour comes, not one of us will reproach himself that he has been too careful, too exact in coming here, to lay his sins and sorrows at the foot of his Saviour's Cross. None of us will then regret having used himself to pray *towards* the temple at least if he could not come *to* the temple; to accompany the Church in his prayers at home, when he was hindered from being present in body. Our Church prayers will then come back to us with a heavenly fragrance which we cannot now imagine: only let us not contradict them by our lives, let us use the grace we here pray for, and avoid the sins we pray against. Then the devotions which have been our comfort in life, will be our salvation in the hour of death: through Him Who is All in all to us, both here and hereafter.

[m] S. Matt. xxv. 23.

SERMON VIII.

THE PEACE AND COMFORT OF OUR OWN HELPLESSNESS.

FIFTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. Matt. vi. 27.

"Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?"

We know how common a thing it is, when any trouble comes on, for people to say to themselves and others, 'It is no use to fret, it can make no difference, what is the good of mourning and vexing one's self? it will but leave things just as they are.' Now here our Blessed Lord Himself, in His perfect sympathy for His poor frail creatures, whom He is not ashamed to call brethren; here, I say, Jesus Christ Himself gives His sanction and encouragement to this kind of help and consolation in trouble. Some of us might have thought it was a poor weak worldly kind of comfort, of small power really to soothe an aching heart, to say, 'It is done and cannot be undone: you cannot help it, why should you go on lamenting it?' But Christ, you see, reasons in that way Himself: Christ Himself condescends to employ this argument

with His afflicted and poor people. When we are taking thought for the morrow, wondering how we are ever to get our bread, how we may prepare ourselves to meet the hard times which we too plainly see approaching: the Voice of the Lord comes sounding to us out of the cloud, and says, Why take thought? why indulge anxious care about such a thing as this? What is the use of it? What good will it do? Which of you by merely taking thought can add one cubit to his stature? Think, dream, wish, imagine, long, as you will, and *that*, for months and years together, and you will find it all to no purpose, if the counsel of the Lord be against you. 'Who is he that saith and it cometh to pass, when the Lord commandeth it not[a]?' It is a very ordinary way of quieting people; and Christ, you see, makes use of it to quiet the poor man's anxiety about himself and his children, how they are to get the necessaries of life. "Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink, nor yet for your body what ye shall put on, for which of you with taking thought can add one cubit into his stature?" i. e. when you have gone thinking and thinking on, how will you be the better for it? It will not in the least help you, you will be just where you were at first. It is just as if a person were for any reason to wish himself taller than he is, and to go on fancying hour after hour how much pleasanter and better it would be: and in the end he would rise up from his dream with just the same stature as he had begun. Such is the case even in respect of such an insignificant matter as the size and stature of a man: God

[a] Lam. iii. 37.

has so ordered your being, that no wish or anxiety of yours can in the least change you in that respect, "if ye then be not able to do that thing which is least, why take ye thought for the rest?" If it is God's will that ye be of such a size, and therefore you are content, and make up your mind to it, how much more in things of greater consequence?

Thus our merciful and indulgent Master vouchsafes to reason with us His wayward children: and what is more, He doth in some sort even condescend to discourse in like manner with Himself. For in the latter part of His ministry on earth, the very last week of it, when He had been telling His disciples, that the hour was come in which He must be glorified, and that He must be like a corn of wheat, must fall into the ground and die before He could bring forth fruit He went on and said, "Now is my soul troubled and what shall I say, Father save me from this hour? but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father glorify Thy Name." As Man, the blessed Saviour declares that He came into the world on purpose to meet and endure that hour. It was settled, and therefore He would not and could not pray absolutely that it might pass away: even as afterwards in His agony: "[c] Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, except I drink it, Thy will be done."

In this then, as in all other things, which concern His people's good and happiness, our Lord taught us both by word and by His perfect example: and thus we see the true meaning of the proverb about adding a cubit to ones stature. You cannot do it, muse on it as much as you will. You had better apply your-

[c] S. Matt. xxvi. 42.

self to things that are within your power. Very plain and simple the words are: but they are the words of God, and as the Wise man says, "Whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever," so we may not doubt, that whatsoever God saith, it is full of deep meaning, more than man can ever find out thoroughly. And here this simple saying, "Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature" contains in itself, rightly understood, a rule and principle which reaches over the whole heart and life of man. The principle I mean is one which the very heathens took notice of, a spirit better than they knew of guiding them no doubt so to do. It is this: all things that are, belong to one or other of two kinds: some the Lord our God puts more or less within each man's own power; others, and by far the greater number, He keeps entirely in *His* power. Our wisdom then and our duty is, to care and labour and be anxious about those only, which He leaves in some measure to ourselves: as for all other things, we are to leave them quietly to Him: not merely because we cannot help it, as the heathen and unbelievers leave things to the evil spirits whom they call gods: but in true content and cheerfulness, rejoicing to be in all dependent on Him, and that He, our All-wise, All-Holy, All-merciful Father, should have His own way in all things.

As for example: the laws of nature (as we call them) are things which the Father hath kept in His own power: as that fire should burn, and water flow downwards not upwards, and the sun rise and set, and summer and winter come on, and the tides of the sea rise and fall, at their own appointed times: all these and other like things every one makes up

his mind to; if a passing thought comes into our fancy, that we could wish any of these things to be otherwise than they are, we dismiss it at once, because we know it to be absurd: we are not grieved or anxious about the sun's setting or rising, but only about the use we and others make or neglect to make of the sun's light. You would think a person out of his senses, if you saw him in great distress or anxiety, and on asking the cause of it were told it was about the flowers and leaves withering in winter, or the days growing shorter, or anything else of that kind; because you know that the Lord has kept these natural events in His own power. Children who do not yet know that these things go on by unchangeable laws, may well be distressed at them: but grown people are not, they take no thought for it, because they know it is a matter of course.

Now then our Lord in His fatherly love and wisdom instructs us to carry on the same way of thinking to other things, in which it is just as reasonable, only we find it much harder to make up our minds to it. He seems to say, as the *operations of nature* are not in your own power, so neither are *the events of things:* therefore these also you must try to leave, as calmly as ever you can, to Him Who keeps them in His own Hands. You have a farm, we will suppose, or a garden: and it is of the greatest consequence to you that your farm or your garden should prosper: your own and your children's bread, as far as you can see, depends on it. Can you help taking thought for it? Yes, you can, if you will attend to our Lord's counsel, and believe His promises: for thus He seems to speak to you: 'You have ploughed

and sown, you have prepared the ground and put in your crop, and have taken all needful care of it, your part is done; now leave the rest quietly to Me: for which of you by merely taking thought can make one grain grow, or keep off one mischievous insect, or shelter the plant from one hour of blight or frost? Leave it to Me: I have promised: do you not see what care I take of the lilies and the birds, shall I not much more take care of you? I have promised, and I do and will promise always, "[d] Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you." Do you see to your faith and obedience; I will see to your food and raiment.'

Or perhaps you have some one sick belonging to you to be looked after: and when you have done your best for them, calling in the best help you can, providing medicine and administering it, watching for all the best comforts Providence has put within your reach, and attending on the sufferer with them: still you are inclined (who can well help it?) to weary yourself with wondering how it will all turn out. You lie awake thinking of it, and calculating all chances, and you are tempted to neglect your other works and duties, your heart is so full, so oppressed with anxiety as to what the event may be.

These indeed are very sore trials: but I need not tell you that there are other cares, far more heart-breaking, more full of anguish than these. The conduct of others, my brethren, of those who are near and dear to us, of those with whom we are entrusted, and of whom in some way we know that we must

[d] S. Matt. vi. 33.

give account: who that has lived any time in the world does not know something of the aching and sickness of heart, when we are uncertain what their course will be, or still worse, when they have begun to go wrong, and we are afraid of worse and worse. And even when we have no special trust, as in regard of public matters, concerning the Church or the state, wherein few of us, perhaps, can have any immediate influence, there have always, we know, been many, of eager imaginative spirits apt to take such intense interest in what is going on, and the probable results, what it will all come to, as to make themselves quite unhappy about it: sometimes to lose their temper and their charity, at others to go on dreaming about the news, while daily tasks and ordinary kindnesses are neglected. But now in each and all of these cases, as soon as ever the trouble becomes inordinate, He is at hand Who careth for us, and would have us cast all our care upon Him. He comes to us like a loving Father to a sick or wayward child, and to all He offers the same simple remedy: 'Compose yourself,' He seems to say, whatever your care and anxiety may be: for all these things, the prosperity of your crops, and the recovery of your sick friends, the conduct of others, even of your children and neighbours, and the course of the world both in temporal and spiritual things, are all out of your own power; which of you by taking thought can alter them? therefore I say unto you, "Take no thought." "Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might;" as long as the great Master assigns you any task, apply yourself to it in all earnestness and charity, but leave the event

of your own works, and the doings of others, which you cannot influence; leave all that calmly and entirely to Him.

But you will say, and all must feel, 'This is too high for us: we cannot but care and be anxious, we cannot but have our maintenance and our ordinary pursuits, our sick friends, our absent friends, our children, our servants, our neighbours, our Church and our country, we cannot but have them all in our hearts; we *must* be anxious, we must take thought for them: of course, we are bound to do what we can for them, and when there is nothing to be done, does not the same affection bind us still to dwell upon the remembrance of them, to muse and brood over our helplessness, and wish it were otherwise?' Yes, this is indeed human nature: men whose affections and interests are deeply engaged, easily persuade themselves that they do well to be restless and anxious even unto death, when as they think they can do nothing; but what says the blessed Gospel? It assures us that there is no such thing for a Christian as being in reality quite helpless: for He Who says, 'What can you do by taking thought,' says also, "All things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive." This is the secret of not taking thought: it does not mean that when people or things are entirely out of our reach we should cease to have them in our minds, but it means that we should turn all our recollections of them into prayer. The moment you begin to feel sad and desponding about any one dear to you, or any innocent object on which you have set your heart, use yourself to say inwardly,

I must pray to God for this beloved one, I must commit this my wish or my fear to God, and so try in earnest to cast all your care upon Him, with a courageous, childlike feeling. *Cast* it upon Him: it is the Scriptural word: do not simply put it into His Hands, do not trust Him with it in measure, or partially, or with any kind of reserve, but thoroughly and at once let it go, throw it off from yourself, and with a brave and noble carelessness fling it, as it were, entirely upon your loving Father. He will receive it; for to this end was He born, and for this cause came He into the world, that He might bear the burdens of us all, and He invites and commands us over and over again, to lean on Him with all our weight; not to pretend to support ourselves at all; for when we are in this sense weak, then and then only are we strong indeed. There is no unkindness surely towards those whom we love, no coldness of heart in our then committing them to Him Who loves them far better than we do, Who gave us all the love we ourselves feel for them. Nor yet is it any way presumptuous in respect of the Lord our God, since in thus resorting to Him both for ourselves and for others we are but responding to His most gracious call, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest," laden it may be with the burden of others as well as with your own. Here, my brethren, we all know it, could we but apply it with a lively faith to ourselves, here is the secret of earthly comfort; so to divide our time between prayer and work, that there shall be absolutely no room left for repining fretful

thoughts. What poor man could be unhappy and discontented, however sad and forlorn he might sometimes feel, who was careful always to offer up his work before he set about it, by prayer for a blessing, and after he had ended it, by thanksgiving and humble penitence, who also in those many instances where he could only wish and not work at all, made a rule of turning his wishes into prayers by seriously remembering that our Lord is witness of them all, and begging Him to grant them for the better not for the worse? What father or mother but would feel consoled even in that most corroding fear and anguish which unthinking or wilful children bring upon their parents, if they would try and use themselves always to follow up those distressing thoughts with this other most true and certain thought, 'Christ is here, to Him I may commit this erring son or daughter, whom He loves better than I do.' Again, when the providence of God has taken any whom we love for the time quite out of our reach, so that we are wholly uncertain both as to their condition and their present course of life: what a precious transporting privilege it is to be invited, as we are, to come close to Him, Who is always as near to them as He is to us, and in spirit to deposit them safely in His arms, as the mothers in the Gospel did their little ones, in sure and certain hope that He will do for them ten thousand times as much as *we* could: all the part of a loving Saviour. Our privilege herein is greater in some sense than was granted in the days of His flesh to those even whom He especially loved: for when Lazarus was sick, and our Lord at a

distance, the thought of Martha and even of Mary was, "if the Lord were here our brother would not die:" but *we* know that our Lord for certain is at the place, and in His Hand a remedy for all the worst we can apprehend: and it may be He only waits for us to call on Him more earnestly, more composedly: as He waited till the quieter Mary joined her devotions to those of Martha, before He raised Lazarus from the dead.

I will now add one word more, for our Lord's rule is very simple, and the willing heart will be able to apply it to every kind of sorrow, inward and outward, even to that deep heart-sorrow which arises from a sense of coldness and spiritual desolation. Even in that case it is doubtless His will that we should understand Him as saying to our hearts, Which of you with taking thought can command his own sense of spiritual comfort? It is one of the things which your heavenly Father hath kept in His own power, take you care of your duties, and He will take care of your consolations.

Whatever measure of disappointment may be in store for *us* either in matters which concern the whole Church, or in respect of our own personal consolations and supports, inward and outward: here is wisdom, and here is duty, and here before long will be found peace and tranquillity, viz. in clinging more and more faithfully to the plain household truths and commandments, "the word which we have heard from the beginning:" in turning all our restless thoughts into prayer, even as with prayer we begin and end all our poor imperfect wishes: offering

both prayer and work humbly and constantly at the Holy Altar Table. Yet a little while, and the hour will come for the last prayer, the last work, the last Holy Communion on earth: the Lord our God will come, and all His saints with Him, and we shall wonder at the strangeness of His salvation when He shall give us perfect peace for only trying to stay our minds on Him the short time that we were abiding here.

SERMON IX.

S. PAUL'S JOY IN PRISON.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

PHIL. iv. 11.

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

WHAT was the condition of the Saint who wrote these words? He was in prison, in danger of his life: he had nothing to live upon, but the charitable offerings of his Christian brethren in different places: for the time he was hindered from any open and visible way of doing good in his calling: and if he were released, he had nothing to look to, but a continuation of the sadness, poverty, and danger.

S. Paul was in prison when he wrote to the Philippians: for he speaks of his bonds in Christ several times in the first chapter. He was in danger of his life: for he says, Christ, he was sure, would be "magnified in his body;" that is, his sufferings would bring glory to Christ, whether it were in his life or in his death: he was "in a strait," whether to wish to die or to live: he did not know how soon he might be offered, how soon his blood might be

poured out, "upon the sacrifice and service of the faith of his brethren."

He was in prison then, and in danger: and what had he to live on during his imprisonment? Nothing, as it appears, but either what he got by the labour of his hands, or what was sent him as a charitable offering by such Christians as those of Philippi, to whom he wrote from his prison, that he "abounded, having received from them their most acceptable offerings," which he calls "a sacrifice well pleasing to God."

Of course, too, while he was thus imprisoned, he must have seemed, to himself and others, in a great measure cut off from doing any good in his high calling: he could not go wherever the Spirit might guide him, "teaching and exhorting publicly, and from house to house:" he could not be "instant in season and out of season." And even if he should be released, as he hoped to be, yet he had no other prospect than poverty and danger before him. He would still have to work for his bread, or to be fed by the alms of the people; he would still have to come to the prison and the grave again.

Such was the outward condition of the great Apostle; to say nothing now of his thousand inward cares and perplexities, enough surely to break the heart of most men, and such as we might think would almost excuse any person for being a little discontented and uneasy at his own lot. But how does S. Paul take it? He is not only content, but joyful. His letter from beginning to end, is written in the most cheerful spirit. "I thank my God," says he, "upon every remembrance of you, always in every

prayer of mine for you all making request with joy." "Whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached, and I therein do rejoice; yea, and will rejoice; for I know that this shall turn to my salvation." "Fulfil ye my joy, that I may rejoice in the day of Christ." "If I be offered up, I joy and rejoice with you: for the same cause do ye joy and rejoice with me." "Rejoice in the Lord alway, and again I say, Rejoice." "I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last your care of me hath flourished again." Joy and rejoicing, peace and contented love, are the very notes, as it were, which make up his hymn, the thoughts which break out of his heart on every occasion, whilst he is writing this affectionate letter to his "brethren dearly beloved and longed for," his "joy and crown." Poor as he was, and reproached, and in prison, and in danger of death, and looking to no better condition as long as he should live in the world; forlorn, too, with no wife, no child, no brother, nor sister, no very near relation or natural friend to support him; yet his heart is overflowing with gladness; it breaks out on every side, like the odour of the blessed Mary Magdalen's ointment, which filled all the house.

It is not that he feels it his duty to be calm and thankful, that he commands himself and forces himself to be so; that he checks and puts down, with more or less pain, the struggling feelings of discontent and vexation with him: this might be a true account of what passed in the mind of many Christians, even of some saints, at times; but it is not the account of what was passing in S. Paul's mind, at least not when he was writing this letter to the Philippians: the joy and thanksgiving of his heart

was then like a well of bright water, springing up within him of itself, without his seeking, without any effort of his. His joy then swelled highest, when outwardly there seemed most reason for fear and sorrow.

What is the account of this? How can it be explained? He tells us himself in one word: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." Or, according to the word which a prophet had before put into the mouth of God's people in their distress: "When I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light unto me." "The Lord is my strength and my song, and is become my salvation."

The Presence of Christ was that good thing in S. Paul's lot, which turned every thing round it into brightness: as in pictures which many of us have seen of our Lord's Nativity, a light is represented beaming from the cradle of the Divine Child, and filling every corner of the house, turning the poor stable and the rude manger into something more glorious, even to the eye, than the richest and brightest halls and pillars in a king's palace. Because of Christ's Presence it seemed to him that he had all and abounded, though he had but enough to go on from day to day, and depended for it on the alms of Christians very far off. Because Christ was with him and in him, he was not cast down by the most untoward things which were every day happening to him. He was in bonds; the Jews of Rome, his brethren after the flesh, were obstinate against him; his name was every where spoken of maliciously, in envy and strife. But Christ was with him, and gave him to see that all this turned out rather to

the furtherance of the Gospel. He was daily on the edge of death, but that was a joy to him, for he desired "to depart and to be with Christ;" nevertheless he was content to live in the flesh, seeing that it so pleased God, because it was more needful for his brethren, for their "furtherance and joy of faith."

What was it that made life and death, so great a matter, a thing so indifferent to S. Paul? Because, whether he lived or died, he knew he should be with Christ. Christ in him, the hope of glory, Christ dwelling in his heart by faith, Christ standing by him to strengthen him:—this was what made him content and joyful to abide in the flesh in the midst of all those sufferings, instead of at once departing to be for ever with Christ glorified.

Now, how was S. Paul so assured of the Presence and the blessing of our Lord Jesus Christ, His actual Presence within him, changing him from glory to glory, and all that befel him into a blessing?

S. Paul knew this, in the first place, by his being made partaker of Christ's Sacraments. Christ's prophet had said to him in Christ's Name, "Arise and be baptized, and wash away thy sins," and he had accepted the invitation: therefore he knew that his sins were washed away; he knew that he had put on Christ, that he was "washed, sanctified, justified, in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." Again, he knew —it is his own way of reasoning with the Corinthians—that he continued a member of that one Body, by his partaking of the One Bread, which is given to all the faithful alike in the Holy Communion.

But then, because it is possible for persons to receive the grace of God's Sacraments in vain; to throw away the great blessings of Baptism and of the Holy Eucharist, by going back to their old sins; therefore S. Paul was ever watchful to add to these outward signs the inward and only certain marks of Christ's Presence. He exercised himself to keep always "a conscience void of offence towards God and towards man." He "lived in all good conscience towards God." He "kept under his body, and brought it into subjection, lest that by any means, when he had preached to others, he himself should be a cast-away." He "knew nothing of himself;" no wilful habitual sin; but he dared not *therefore* say he was righteous; his own doings he knew could never justify him: *that* must be the work of Christ's aweful Presence within him. Yet this comfort he had in them, that they were a token of Christ's Presence.

It is his own account of the matter. "Our rejoicing is this; the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to youward." And again, "As we have received mercy, we faint not; but have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully, but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." These are a few out of many places, which shew how S. Paul was enabled to turn his affliction into joy; to feel as if he had all and abounded, when he was in prison, living on charity, and in daily peril of death with

torments. He knew that Christ was with him by His Sacraments, and he had the sober testimony of his own conscience, that he had not forfeited the grace of those Sacraments: he had not driven Christ away from him.

This account of S. Paul's content and joyfulness is also too true and plain an account, why the world, as we see it around us, has so little of content and joyfulness in it at present. Is it not so? Look where you will, are not the generality of people in care and trouble?

I do not now speak of that care and trouble, which arises from doubt and fear about holy things; from anxiety lest they should not have found Christ, or fear lest they should have forfeited His blessed Presence. No doubt, there is a good deal of such distress as that among Christians in all times, especially in these: but for that kind of fear and trouble, the sense of our sins and the fear of losing Christ's Presence, there is this great and sure consolation: that let it be as bitter as it may, it is in the way towards healing; for that is the very case concerning which our Lord has said, "Come unto Me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

It is not of this fear that I am now speaking, but of that which is unhappily far more common: discontent, and care, and fretfulness about our condition in this life. Every one of course is tempted to this, for no one's condition, I suppose, is exactly what he could wish: every one is tempted to be discontented and fretful, but no one surely is forced to give way to the temptation, any more than to any other bad inclination. No Christian can truly say, 'I cannot

help grumbling and repining,' any more than he can say, 'I cannot help saying bad words, or, I cannot help lusting after evil things.' Fretting care, and fear, and vexation of heart, and grudging against others, cannot be the necessary condition of any of Christ's people. There must be a remedy for it in the Gospel, as for every other sin and misery, had we but the heart to use it.

And yet, how is it with us, I fear I must say with almost all of us, in this respect? Think of S. Paul in his imprisonment, living from day to day on the alms of his brethren: or of the same S. Paul out of prison, refusing alms, and maintaining himself as he might, by his trade. So far, S. Paul was in the condition of by far the greater number of the inhabitants of this or any other place, who are either supported by others, or are getting their own bread, but seldom perhaps in either case so abundantly as we might wish. S. Paul was outwardly in the same condition as most of the labourers and tradesmen in this or in any other English village: but he says, "I have all and abound: I am exceeding joyful in in all my tribulations: I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content:" and we, alas! wherever we go, speak and hear very different sounds from these. I say *we*, because it is too true, that discontent and fretfulness belong to those who have enough and to spare, quite as commonly as it does to the poor and needy; and the devil craftily manages to make some men quite as miserable through an unchristian fear of want, as others are made by an unchristian way of bearing it.

All of us then, my brethren, are in danger (who

shall deny it?) of indulging such thoughts, and feelings, and questionings as these: 'How hard the times are! how unkind every one is! how little I am looked on in comparison of others! how unreasonable it is of this employer or that master, to expect so much of me, or allow me so little! Such an one may be contented, for he has not this or that burthen which I have: or he has this or that help which I have not: but as for me, all things are against me, and how can I be easy in my mind?'

Is it not too true, that a great number of us, in various conditions of life, have so long gone on indulging themselves in thoughts and words like these, that they are become quite habitual to them, worn as one may say into the very grain and staple of their lives? Night and day they abound in such thoughts: they lie down to rest with them, and with them they awake in the morning: till at last, instead of rejoicing, like S. Paul in his prison and want, they shew rather in the sight of God and His Angels, who are all the while watching them, such a dismal picture as the prophet describes, speaking of the last days of a corrupt Church and people: "Men shall pass through the land, hardly bestead and hungry; and it shall come to pass, that when they shall be hungry, they shall fret themselves, and curse their king and their God, and shall look upward. And they shall look unto the earth, and behold trouble and darkness, dimness of anguish; and they shall be driven to darkness."

Now why is it that we are so miserable, or at best so unquiet, whereas S. Paul in the same or a much more forlorn condition was so full of content and joy

and hope? Surely because we want what he had: the inward witness of our conscience, assuring us that we have in such a measure kept our baptismal vow, as not to have forfeited the Presence of Jesus Christ. Surely, if we would be content and happy, we must recover this inward witness, for by God's exceeding mercy it may be recovered, so far as that our consciences may assure us of endeavouring at least to be truly and continually penitent. We, as S. Paul, may from this time forth exercise ourselves in keeping a good conscience toward God and toward man. As we get on in that good work, we shall learn with S. Paul to be content. I do not say that we shall of course be joyful: the memory of past sins may for a long time more or less hinder our feeling bright and lively in our spirits: but this, by God's blessing, we may depend on, that as the work of true repentance goes on, the gracious Saviour of our souls will be more and more effectually present in our hearts: a sweet and calm hope will revive within us, though we may never in this world feel a joyful confidence such as S. Paul's: and our path, though often clouded by sad remembrances, will on the whole grow brighter and brighter.

When we are entered on such a course as this, our present discomforts will very soon cease to make us discontented. Whatever they may be, we shall learn to take them thankfully, as God's appointed way of chastening us here, that He may spare us hereafter.

What can a poor person do better, than offer up his wants and cares and sorrows as a kind of sacrifice

to Almighty God, to be united to that grief which our Lord bore for him on the Cross? If he bear them thankfully for Christ's sake, they make him more like Christ, they bring him nearer to Christ; and so, though sharp in themselves, they will be sweet to him: for that which brings Christ nearer, how can it be other than a joy, to one who at all truly loves Christ?

SERMON X.

CHRISTIAN BEHAVIOUR IN HARVEST[a].

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

RUTH ii. 4.

"*And behold, Boaz came from Bethlehem, and said to the reapers, The Lord be with you. And they answered him, The Lord bless thee.*"

ALL times and seasons have their peculiar trials: in every one of them God is proving His people, in every one of them the Evil one is watching to ruin them: for every one the Bible in the hand of the Church is a sure and sufficient guide. And among the rest, no doubt this time of harvest, coming round by God's providence every year, and continuing commonly for many weeks; no doubt this also has its particular dangers, its own special trials and temptations, for all who are any way concerned in it. And who is not concerned in it, either as owner of crops, or as a labourer, or at least as a receiver and consumer of God's bounty so poured out on us?

Now, then, that we are about, by God's blessing, to begin gathering in the fruits of this present year, it may be well to consider seriously, seriously as

[a] Preached in 1843.

before God, some of the duties and trials of the time of harvest. And to what part of Holy Scripture can we so naturally turn, as to the beautiful history of Ruth? That history is in fact an account of God's gracious providence, blessing both rich and poor, a wealthy man and a poor widow, for their good and religious use of the time of harvest. I suppose it would be quite true to say, that whoever will keep in his heart, and practise, the good examples, and hints of God's pleasure, which are found throughout this short book of Ruth, that man, as far as his part goes, will surely win a blessing on whatever harvest he is concerned in. Which of us would not give a great deal, at this moment, to be sure of a blessing on the harvest, which is now just beginning, after so long delay? Is not this the very thing which has made us all so anxious for so many weeks, not to say months? Well, here is the way to make sure of that blessing: here is the relief and cure of that anxiety. See how the faithful servants of God, with whom we are sure He was of old, see how they began and ended their harvest: do you the same, and you will be favoured as they were.

First, and above all, remember always that your harvest can have no blessing except it be begun and ended in the fear of God. Look at the picture which the text sets before us: the picture of a harvest-field near Bethlehem, in the beginning of barley-harvest, which in that country, as in some parts of our own, comes before wheat-harvest, twelve or thirteen years before the birth of Jesus Christ. The reapers have entered on the field, and the gleaners have begun gleaning after them: and behold the master comes

out to see the work. Boaz comes from Bethlehem, and says to the reapers, "The Lord be with you," and they answer, "The Lord bless thee." See here a beginning made in the fear of God. The master blesses the men, and the men the master. It is like our Church service, where the priest and the people mutually pray for one another: "The Lord be with you," "And with thy spirit." And indeed, perhaps, that very verse and response was in the first place taken from this simple salutation of Boaz and his reapers. They little thought, when with kind and devout hearts they so bade good day to each other, that they were setting a pattern for a holy service, which the Church of God, guided by His Spirit, would take up from them and use for ever. Yet so it is: they have somewhat of the same honour given them as David in the Old Testament, the blessed Virgin, Simeon, Zacharias, and others in the New: the honour to have their words appointed to be used by all Christians in their solemn offices of praise and thanksgiving: one of the greatest honours, surely, on this side the grave.

"The Lord be with you," said Boaz: and it was a salutation well fitted for one coming as he did from Bethlehem. For Bethlehem was, in the counsels of God, in many respects, a holy place. It was the place where David was; where he was anointed; where he kept his sheep; where no doubt he wrote many of his Psalms. Above all, it was the place ordained for the Birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; and therefore its very name was, by God's providence, made to set forth a high and peculiar grace. For Bethlehem means "the House of Bread:"

that is, the birthplace, and partly the home of Him Who is the true Bread from heaven, of Whom whosoever eateth shall live for ever. Bethlehem is a figure of the Church, for the Church is the true House of Bread. In the Church the Son of God, the Living Bread, is "verily and indeed taken and received by the faithful in the Lord's Supper." When I read, therefore, of Boaz coming from Bethlehem among his reapers, it puts me in mind of a Christian husbandman, beginning the season of harvest by worthily receiving the Holy Communion, and then going out cheerfully into his field, overlooking his sheaves, and directing his men, in good hope of a blessing on his labours, because such an one will have firm trust in God's goodness, and a full purpose to do right, by His grace, in all trials, little and great.

Boaz had such thoughts of God; for we see how kind and good and charitable he was to the destitute young widow, Ruth, who, as God's providence had ordered it, was gleaning in that very field. When he found who she was, he told her to take her portion with his work-people, shewed her all kindness himself, and charged them to be kind to her also. And because she was a young person, and he was not only charitable but considerate, he told her to keep fast by his maidens, charged the young men that they should not disturb her, and commanded them to let her glean freely without reproach or rebuke: and indeed his whole behaviour towards her shewed him to be both pure and wise of heart. And there are tokens that his servants were such as might be expected from so good and considerate a master: they cheerfully reply to his salutation;

"The Lord bless thee," like persons who were glad to see him among them: and it is clear that they attended to his commands regarding Ruth: they kept themselves in order when he was out of sight, otherwise she would not have gone on, as she did, gleaning in his fields to the very end of the harvest.

Such was the harvest-field of that good and faithful Israelite, and see how great was the blessing of God upon it. He obtained Ruth to be his wife, a most pure, devout, affectionate, self-denying person; and by her he became the great-grandfather of David, and the ancestor of our Lord Jesus Christ. That great happiness and honour he would have entirely forfeited, had he behaved, as too many would have done in his place, either rudely, scornfully, or cruelly.

I would that the harvest-fields of Christian owners, having Christian labourers at work in them, were oftener ordered after this sacred pattern. For, if you observe it, this history contains what may warn us against all the most ordinary temptations of this employment and this time of year.

There is a temptation, first of all, to forget God, in anxious forethought, or in hard work. For many weeks on from about this time, you will be, many of you, up early and late, your minds and hearts set upon your work; every minute will seem to be wanted, and you will be greatly tempted either to forget your prayers, or to say them over in a hurried disrespectful way. Then you will be so exhausted with the week's work, that even when Sunday comes, you will too readily make some excuse why you need not come to God's house. It is a sad truth, that the Church is generally more neglected, even on Sun-

days, when harvest is going on, than during the rest of the summer; and yet one would think that we should all feel, that that is a time when we need an especial blessing. There may be some plea for this perhaps in some cases, when people's work has been very hard: but in any case take care, I beseech you, and watch yourselves, lest you find at the end of these harvest weeks, that you are become more heathenish, harder and profaner in heart, than you are now. You will do so of course, if you are not on your guard. Six weeks or two months of continual pressing care about a worldly task, disturbing prayer, and leaving no leisure for good books: how can one go through such a time and not be the worse for it, without God's special grace? And how can this be had, but by earnest prayer and communion?

But look at Boaz: he remembered God in the field; much more, you may be sure, did he remember Him in the sanctuary. He used the Lord's Name to bless his people; how should that holy Name come out of his mouth to curse them? No anger, no sense of ill-usage, depend upon it, could stir him up to such blasphemous words, as too many of our time allow themselves in, when heated by harvest or any other hard work. It is a sad thing, indeed, that Christians cannot labour together, gathering the fruits of the earth in a quiet honest way, without the air being polluted by horrid oaths, and curses, and other foul and profane talk. Have we not reason to fear, that some great part of the blessing of this and of other harvests may have been forfeited by this sin of swearing in particular, so common as it unhappily is in our fields and along our roads? For surely it must

be in a remarkable degree affronting to the Giver of all goodness, to be thus continually insulting His Name in the very act of receiving His bounty, and when the very dullest must feel, that if He do but hide His face for a moment, if He let loose His storms but for a very short time, all our hopes are gone, and we have famine instead of plenty.

Again, there is in some parts of harvest work, at least in gleaning, which goes along with it, a good deal of liberty which is often dangerous. Persons are assembled with no one to keep them in order: there is danger of rudeness, wantonness, intemperance; of intemperance especially, when they come home heated and wearied. Yet surely it is no great thing to ask, that Christian labourers should be like those reapers of Boaz, and not behave one way in sight and another out of sight. Surely Christian young men need not be ashamed to be kind and courteous, and respectful to those who cannot protect themselves, when they read how those workmen in the field of Bethlehem behaved to the young stranger Ruth, coming suddenly among them. Neither should Christian masters think much to follow this patriarch in his considerate care, and look a little, as they best may, after the behaviour of those whom they employ or permit upon their grounds. If they care for God's blessing upon their crop, this surely is a likelier way to win it, than if they left every one, in a proud carelessness, to take his own course.

As to dishonesty, hard or unfair bargains, liberties taken with men's property, or with the time which in fact is theirs, since they are to pay for it: we all feel at once how strange and false a thing it must be,

to ask God's blessing and protection on any such ways; and then, what sort of a course is that on which we are afraid to ask God's blessing? Better lie in bed palsied or full of sores, than work ever so industriously and successfully, if such deadly sin go along with our work.

Lastly, let us beware of discontent and unthankness. Our times are, no doubt, very trying in that respect; all times, I suppose, are so: but the more men are tempted, the more reason that the ministers of Christ should remind them continually, that all is His will and His doing, and He knows best. What if we were to make this harvest, which is just coming on, a school for ourselves in that excellent art of true resignation to God's most holy will? It will have its untoward accidents, no doubt; our hopes will be often disappointed or deferred by mistakes, unseasonable weather, or the like. Who knows indeed, whether for our many sins it may not prove a failing harvest, failing in comparison with our hopes, in the country generally? We have not, unhappily, so lived, as that such a mark of God's anger should be past belief. But let this or any thing else happen, our duty is to make up our minds beforehand that what God wills must be right; to see His countenance through the cloud, His hand guiding the storm; and so not only to refrain from hard *sayings* of discontent at the weather, such as all are shocked at, who are not entirely irreligious, but even to submit our innermost souls in peace and contentment to His will, however severe. None of us can doubt, that it is happier far, if such be His will, to bear the greatest losses with a submissive mind, than to make

the greatest gain with a spirit lifted up, and withdrawn from holy things.

Finally, committing ourselves and our works to Him in well-doing, as to a faithful Creator, let us each one for himself resolve, by His grace, to do our part, that our families may be holy families, our village a holy village, our harvests gathered in, like this of righteous Boaz, in devout acknowledgment of God's Presence, in considerate care for the orphan, the fatherless, and the widow, and in watchful anxiety to avoid sin and scandal among all committed to our charge; that as Boaz and Ruth became the ancestors of David, and of the Son of God Himself, and so were made use of to carry on His aweful purposes, so we may in our day, each of us, do some little towards the coming of His kingdom. So, to conclude with what sounds like a harvest hymn of the Psalmist, May "our garners be full and plenteous with all manner of store; no decay, no leading into captivity, and no complaining in our streets:" and may we be "a happy people, having the Lord for our God!" Or if our sins have lost us that blessing, may we at least be a penitent people, having hope to be forgiven through Christ Jesus!

SERMON XI.

GOD'S THRESHING, AND THE CORN OF HIS FLOOR[a].

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. MATT. xiii. 39.

"*The harvest is the end of the world.*"

THE labours of one more harvest are now, I believe, fairly completed; the plough and the harrow, the scythe and the sickle, have done their work for this season: the barns and the yards are stored, and the husbandman's anxieties are so far over. And surely we have great reason to be thankful to God Almighty for the comparative plenty of this season: especially when we look back on the last sowing time, and recollect how many weeks and months we had of what seemed most unseasonable weather, so that in very many places the principal crops could not be got into the ground until very long after the proper time, and there seemed reason to fear a great falling off in the provision of thousands for the next winter. From these fears we have been relieved: not surely for any merit of ours, but entirely through the mercy of Him Who "maketh His sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

[a] Preached after harvest in 1842.

And it is to be hoped that we have all before now offered up thanksgivings again and again for so great, so undeserved, an instance of His fatherly care. Many of us for some weeks past have had in our mouths such words as these: "What a blessed time we have had! how gracious God has been to the land! how grateful we ought to be!" Surely it were a great pity to let all this spend itself in mere good feelings and good words. We should be ashamed to do so, if we had to deal with an earthly benefactor, whose bread we were daily eating. Did we know of any particular object on which he had set his heart, and which we had it in our power to forward, we should account it too bad in ourselves to neglect that object, or be but cold in pursuing it.

Now the great object with the Lord of the harvest, in the ordering of this lower world, is, as we know, the establishment and furtherance of the kingdom of heaven: and He constantly sets before us the harvest, with its various cares and works, as what may teach us a great deal of that kingdom. It may then, by His blessing, be a good way of shewing our thankfulness, if we try to consider and fix in our minds what inward and spiritual lessons He meant us to learn, by the outward appearances and various experience of this and of every year's harvest. It is in fact a great and aweful parable, repeated to our very eyes as regularly as the year comes round. Let us attend to it with something of the same earnest awefulness of mind, as if we were actually by, and heard our Lord explain it, as He sometimes did in His parables, to the multitude gathered round Him.

"The harvest," He tells us, "is the end of the world." It is the regular Scriptural image of the great Day of Judgement. Thus in the prophet Joel: "Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about;—let the heathen be wakened, and come up. . . for then will I sit to judge all the heathen round about: put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe." And again S. John in the Revelation "looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like the Son of Man, having on His head a golden crown, and in His hand a sharp sickle. And another Angel came out of the temple, crying with a loud voice to Him that sat on the cloud, Thrust in Thy sickle, and reap, for the time is come for Thee to reap; for the harvest of the earth is ripe. And He that sat on the cloud thrust in His sickle on the earth; and the earth was reaped."

The Almighty then plainly intends, that thoughtful persons, having His instructions in their hearts, should be reminded, when they see a harvest field, of that which we shall all see at the end of the world. Our first thoughts naturally are of the beauty and richness of the sight, and of the great relief and comfort which comes of it to men's bodies, and to the estate of the world. But he that will take a hint from our Lord's own instructions, will look further on, to things out of bodily sight. He will see in each stalk of corn the token of his own changed body, to rise one day out of the grave, the same with this which now is, yet as unlike it as the plant of wheat is unlike the dry grain which was sown. He will see in the reapers, the Angels or messengers of

Christ, sent forth in these last days to gather together His elect from the one end of the earth to the other. The sickle will represent to him God's fearful judgements on this world and on the sinners in it, whereby this final gathering is to be accomplished.

Let us use ourselves to such thoughts as these, If we have hitherto been accustomed to regard the harvest as a matter merely of this world: if we have gone through this present season, not (it may be hoped) unthankful to Him Who openeth His hand and filleth all things living with plenteousness, but without any special thought of the great Day of Judgement, as being that which such seasons were meant to remind us of; I beseech you, let us resolve to do so no more. Let us not think only of prices and crops, of skill and labour, and wages, and of the meat which perisheth; but let us use ourselves, when we see this principal work of the year going on, to imagine, and see with our mind's eye, the great work of God's everlasting year; the gathering in for eternity of the whole world.

To enter a little more into particulars:—The corn, standing in its place, is like the children of the Church, either as yet in the first life, or newly raised out of their graves, awaiting the sickle: that is, awaiting the commands of the Lord of the harvest, the Son of Man on His throne, Who shall send forth His reapers, His Angels and saints, to gather out of His kingdom all offenders and all evildoers, to be burned like tares in the fire, and to gather the wheat, His fruitful ones, into His barn.

"The harvest is the end of the world," the time appointed by the Master. Other persons, perhaps,

going along the field, may have been wondering, from time to time, when it would be reaped, thinking how ripe it was, some perhaps blaming the owner for waiting so long: but in the mean time he is the judge; when he sees fit, and not sooner, the work shall begin. Just so it is with the great day; some perhaps will have been complaining, and crying out with the saints under the Altar, "How long, O Lord, dost Thou not judge and avenge our cause?" But it all rests with Him: when He sees fit, and no sooner, the sickle will be put forth, and the harvest of the earth reaped: and that suddenly, and so as to take the greater number unprepared.

Again: even in the cleanest and best cultivated land, up to the very time of gathering the crop, we see a mixture of weeds and corn; and our Lord in the parable of the tares, from which the text is taken, expressly warns us that this will be the case in His kingdom, even unto the great day. The tares which the enemy hath sown are to grow together with the wheat unto the harvest. Scandalous persons and evil-doers will be not entirely rooted out of the Church, until that day come. God Almighty bears with them so far, and so must we for a time.

Again, it is a natural thought, when the harvest comes, that now is the real time of trying and judging of all the different plans and modes of cultivation, which have been adopted in different grounds throughout the year. Now, and not until now, are the kindliness of the soil and the skill of the husbandman put to their final and certain proof. Our works, all the year through, have had reference to this moment: if they are found to answer now, it is well: if not, how-

ever fair and promising appearances may have been for a time, the whole is a failure. The corn may have sprung up early, the field may have looked green and beautiful and refreshing, the ears may have seemed healthful, and have waved pleasantly in the wind: but this is not what the husbandman looks for: he is intent on the end: he looks to see if the ripe sheaves yield abundantly: that is what answers his purpose, that and nothing else.

Do you not at once see, how true all this is in a spiritual sense? If we are wise we too shall look forward, all the year through, to the time of harvest. Nothing will satisfy us, short of that which will do us good at the last day. The greenness and beauty of early beginnings in goodness, the fair and rich promise of later years, and what seems good works, will be a hope and comfort to us, but we shall not depend upon them. We shall still look forward, with awefulness and fear, to the end, and shall try to order all our doings in such a way as may profit us then: remembering that "God seeth not as man seeth." Fair words and good intentions now, are like the greenness of corn in spring: they will but make the disappointment bitterer, if the harvest come and find us without good fruit.

It is often found that the corn yields very differently from what had been expected: this present year, I believe is an instance: the ears that seemed short, and from which little was expected, are found well stored with wholesome and nourishing grain. Here is a hint to stay our unruly tongues, so apt to pass sentence upon this or that one among our neighbours. If we cannot judge beforehand of the

corn which we see growing close to us, how much less of the hearts and lives of our brethren, which we do not see! "Wherefore judge nothing before the time, untill the Lord come:" then, and not till then, "shall every man's work be made manifest."

This does not of course hinder, but that Christians must see, and mournfully condemn, gross and notorious sin and irreligion, such works as those, of which we plainly read, that they who do them shall not inherit God's kingdom; just as the husbandman, though he cannot exactly foresee how this or that sample will yield, knows when he sees an ear of corn thoroughly diseased with blight or mildew. He is sure *that* can bear nothing, whether other ears bear more or less.

Another thought, which Holy Scripture suggests to Christians watching harvest work, is this: here we see the end and the result of a long course of providences on the part of Almighty God, carried on in secret, in a manner unknown to us, but all tending one way, and now at last bearing their fruit. Such is the course of this world altogether, and of the Church or kingdom of God in it. Our Lord has taught us so most expressly. "So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed into the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring and grow up, he knoweth not how. For the earth bringeth forth of itself, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come." As surely as the sunshine and showers, the qualities of the air and soil, are acting on the seeds and plants, and preparing them for the harvest in a way secret

to us; so is the Almighty, by His dealings with the world and the Church, preparing for the final accomplishment of His great work.

And as we reasonably count it wicked and profane, to speak against Him on account of the weather which He sends, so let us make up our minds to acquiesce in His dealings, to hold our peace at His Presence, in regard of all the other concerns of this world, whether public or private, whether a whole nation be concerned in them, or only some one family; whether they affect ourselves or our friends. We may be sure that all tends in some unknown way to the accomplishment of His great and holy will: there is but one thing that we need be very anxious about, and that, by His grace, depends entirely on ourselves: namely, where we shall be ourselves found in that great day of ingathering. Look you well to this first, and all other things, doubt it not, shall be added unto you.

Neither are we to be cast down, if our trial cost us a good deal of pain and self-denial. If we win the prize at last, all this will seem little to us, or rather, it will increase our joy: as the husbandman has a peculiar delight in harvest-time, recollecting what difficulties he has overcome, and by how much thoughtful contrivance and laborious self-denial he has caused the stubborn ground to become, under God's blessing, fruitful and kindly.

Of this also, the Scripture takes notice. "They that sow in tears, shall reap in joy. He that now goeth on his way weeping, and beareth forth good seed, shall doubtless come again with joy, and bring his sheaves with him."

But the most overpowering and aweful of all the thoughts which the harvest suggests to a believing mind, is that of the threshing, or separation, which it leads to. As in common harvest, so in this great harvest of all, there will be tares to be parted from among the wheat, chaff to be winnowed away from the grain. Thus the office of the Judge was described by His Forerunner: "His fan is in His hand, and He will throughly purge His floor, and will gather the wheat into His garner, but will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." "He will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into My barn." Then will be "discerning between the righteous and the wicked, between him that serveth God and him that serveth Him not," when "the day cometh which shall burn as an oven, and the proud, yea and all that do wickedly, shall be as stubble, and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the Lord of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch." Or as it is in the well-known Psalm: "The ungodly shall be like the chaff, which the wind scattereth away from the face of the earth. The ungodly shall not be able to stand in the judgement, neither the sinners in the congregation of the righteous." These, and many more places of Scripture, represent to us the unsparing separation which the power of God will make after the harvest of the earth has been reaped; a thing which we can hardly now conceive, however true and certain we know it to be. Good and evil are seemingly so mixed up, in our own consciences, alas! as well as in the world around us, that it is even

beyond our imagination, how the one should be so entirely separated from the other, as we know they will be after the Day of Judgement. But so neither can a child understand how the corn and weeds, which he sees growing together, can be thoroughly parted asunder; how the good grain can be parted from the chaff and husks, which he sees gathered in with it. Yet the crop is to be so treated; the child's ignorance makes no difference in that; neither because we are unable to comprehend how, will the Great Husbandman be the less able to separate and distinguish the saved from the lost in that day.

And all that is lost, we read, shall be burned: there is no middle state between happiness and misery; only the furnace of fire for the tares and chaff, and the Lord's garner for the wheat.

Lose no time, I beseech you, in imagining, "How can these things be?" but consider your own case, that you must yourself be in the one company or the other; and that the Almighty, by a great miracle of His mercy, having given us our choice, we are inexcusable, and at once guilty of death, if we do not choose life with all our heart.

As the harvest is thus on the one hand, a token of the punishment prepared for the wicked, so it may help us to think worthily of the joy prepared for Christ's obedient ones, a subject no less aweful and mysterious in its way. The corn, we know, is not housed and threshed that it may remain in so many separate grains, but that many grains being duly prepared, and mixed into one loaf, it may so fulfil its purpose for the good of God's creatures. Even so God has not made us to be happy each singly and

apart from the rest: we must be incorporated into one Body, the Body of Christ; joined together, really and spiritually, as members of His Church and kingdom. This union He Himself represents to us under the figure of Bread; partly, I suppose, that we may understand how close and intimate it is; not like several limbs and joints compacted together, but like drops of water or small portions of air, mutually running one into another. "We, being many, are one Bread and one Body." We are one Bread, by our union with Him Who is the Life of our souls; one, because we all have one and the same spiritual Life, from One Head, Jesus Christ, and are meant to be joined together in nearer and closer participation of Him for ever.

And of this the Holy Communion is a token and pledge, and the great means also, whereby God brings it to pass in this world. As the Apostle goes on and says, "We are one Bread and one Body: for we are all partakers of that one Bread." The virtue of that holy thing, which the faithful receive in the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, is such, that it kneads, as it were together, and forms into one loaf, one Body, one Christ, the whole number of Christian people, in all places, and at all times. And of this the Bread which the Priest duly offers on the Lord's holy Altar or table is an emblem; as the twelve loaves or shew-bread which used to be placed on the table in the outer tabernacle, were an emblem of the twelve tribes of Israel duly offering themselves to the Almighty; not each person apart, but in that union which God intended them to partake of.

Thus, as the works of the harvest and the threshing-floor were meant to be to every one of us signs

and remembrances of the great and dreadful day, so the bread, the fruit of the harvest, is the token and pledge of the blessed end of that day to all who have not forfeited their portion in Christ; Union with Him and His saints in His everlasting kingdom.

Finally, when the harvest is over, the husbandman's natural thought must be, 'Here is the chief work of this year done: it is over, and cannot be recalled: if I have managed my ground ill, and so made it less fruitful than it should be, I can but take the consequences; it is too late to think of amending it for this season.' Such thoughts as these may help us to represent to ourselves the confusion and self-reproach of the slothful ones in that harvest, after which there will be no seed-time, no months of renewed labour, to make up for past negligence, no spring or summer to provide for another autumn. Such a state of mind the Prophet seems to have had in his thoughts, when in the name of God's suffering people, full of remorses, but not truly repenting, he cried out, "The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."

What if this should be our case? and it will be our case, if we live not always in fear of it. We shall be chaff and not wheat, the wind will carry us away, if we be not careful to maintain our communion with Jesus Christ, by all holy desires, good counsels, and Church ordinances; and, above all, by strict keeping of the commandments; and by long, deep, bitter repentance, when they have been broken: and all this, as the yet more perfect and only preparation for the Holy Communion of the Body and Blood of Christ, which is itself the way to be one with Him hereafter for ever.

SERMON XII.

OUR BLESSINGS CURSED.

SIXTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

MALACHI ii. 2.

"If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto My Name, saith the Lord of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart."

YOU hear, brethren, what the Lord says: and I do not know that we can find a much more fearful saying in the whole Bible. For only consider what a thing it is to be given over to evil by Him Who is the Fountain of all good. There is an old saying, 'If oil and balsam kill, what salve can cure?' So we may well ask, 'If Almighty God curse, to whom may we look for a blessing?' He is the blessed God, the Fountain of all blessing, blessed, and blessed-making. There is no good, no comfort, no hope, in any of the creatures, but it comes from Him. As the Psalmist teaches us to praise Him, "[a] with Thee is the well of life, and in Thy light shall we see light." His

[a] Ps. xxxvi. 9.

cursing then is as if the fountain of life were poisoned, and turned into death; as if that should happen, which He so solemnly warns us of: "[b] If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" Can such a thing be? Can God, Who is love, ever so turn away His Face from His creatures whom He hath loved and begun to bless? Yes, indeed, it may be so: all Scripture declares it most clearly, from the first threatening pronounced to Adam, "[c] In the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die," to the last sentence hereafter to be pronounced on the wicked, "[d] Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels." There are some, whom the Lord hath blessed, and yet He may and will curse their blessings. Who are they? For it most deeply concerns us to know. For we are, one and all of us, most exceedingly blessed of God, and better, far better were it for us that we had never been born, never blessed at all, than that He should be provoked to curse His own blessings in us.

If indeed He could be like the frail and wicked sons of man, whose way so often is, to love and hate one another at random, choosing one and casting off another, merely because they have a fancy to do so: if God were a man, that He should lie, or the son of man, that He should repent, and change His mind for no reason, only because it was His will: then we might leave the matter to itself and take our chance with the heathen who know not God. But it is far otherwise: "[e] God is not a man, that He

[b] S. Matt. vi. 23. [c] Gen. ii. 17.
[d] S. Matt. xxv. 41. [e] Numbers xxiii. 19.

should lie; neither the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" And this is what He hath said and spoken, that when He does curse our blessings, it is because we do not lay them to heart, as being really His blessings. Laying to heart, consideration, that is the point: that is what makes the difference between one and another of those who receive blessings from God: just as in our Lord's parable of the sower the difference is not in the seed but in the ground. It was good seed all over the field, but the wayside, the rock, and the thorny hedge-side, were unprepared to receive it: only in the good ground did it come to anything. So it is with all His gifts and blessings: they turn into punishments and curses, if we will not take them as coming from Him, and order our hearts and ways accordingly. When therefore things most appear to be going well with us inwardly and outwardly: when the Almighty is showering His favours upon us, and seems to be granting us our heart's desire and prayer, whether for ourselves or for those who are near and dear to us: then, if ever, are we bound to watch ourselves; then the sayings come home to us, so often repeated in Scripture to the highly favoured people: "[f] When thou hast eaten and art full, beware that thou forget not the Lord thy God, and thou say in thine heart, my power and the might of mine hand hath gotten me this wealth; but thou shalt remember the Lord thy God." Or as it is in another prophet, who spake to the people about the same time as Malachi, after they

[f] Deut. viii. 10. 11. 17.

were come home from captivity, and the hand of the Lord seemed again to be on them for good, "[g] Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways." Forgetting God, thoughtlessness, want of consideration, not laying things to heart; these were the faults, this the ungodly mind, against which the people of God needed especially to be warned, when God was shewing Himself most merciful and indulgent to them: and if they would not take the warning, there could be but one end for them: He would curse their blessings: His mercy and indulgence would prove, as the Scripture says, like coals of fire heaped on their heads, making their portion worse instead of better. Yea, by His most righteous judgement the very things that should have been for their wealth will be unto them an occasion of falling[h]: their punishment will arise out of the very circumstances which, if they had taken them aright, would have made them happy for ever. I will explain what I mean by a few instances, taken some from Holy Scripture, some from the experience of common life; for in both very many may be found.

Look, for example, on the Jewish priests, to whom the prophet Malachi is speaking in the text. God had been especially good to them, calling them out of their sad captivity in Babylon, and restoring them to their priestly office, to do sacrifices again in His house: and they were untrue and unbelieving, therefore He threatens them: "[i] I will corrupt your seed, and will spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it, saith the Lord." I have "made you con-

[g] Haggai i. 5. [h] Ps. lxix. 23. [i] Mal. ii. 3. 9.

temptible and base before all the people." This was their punishment, they had not had their calling at heart: they had been many ways irreverent and scandalous, they had caused many to stumble at the law: and so God caused them in the very exercise of their office to fall into scorn and reproach. And I suppose, my brethren, that we should one and all expect some peculiar judgement to fall on wicked clergymen rather than on other sinners: even because they have received such high favour, such a solemn trust from God, in making them clergymen. In them beyond others we seem to feel something of the dreadful meaning of that verse "their prayer shall be turned into sin[k]." (Remember this now, and pray the more earnestly for those who are to be ordained.)

Again, think of holy Matrimony; what a treasure of hopes and comforts for the life which now is, and for that which is to come, was provided for sinful man by the Giver of all goodness, when He ordained that great mystery! and how sadly, alas! it is blemished and profaned by men's wicked unholy ways; how often it ends in absolute ruin and misery, and that perhaps for many generations; we see in part, but we have reason to fear a great deal more than we see. You know what married persons vow to their God and to one another, and how happy the homes of Christian people would be, if all were but tolerably earnest in making that vow at first, tolerably dutiful in keeping it afterwards. What can we say, but that very very often the blessing is too surely cursed, because men and women, who should have known better, were not careful to lay it to

[k] Ps. cix. 6.

heart; they neither undertook their marriage at first in the fear of God and as in His Presence, nor have they seriously sought His blessing since, all along on their married life, but have lived at random, pleasing themselves; and so all manner of roots of bitterness have been permitted to spring up and trouble them: many have been corrupted; many made miserable; many, we may fear, finally cast away.

Again: "[l]children, and the fruit of the womb, are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord:" but these too, for want of consideration, are another instance of a blessing cursed. They make their parents' old age miserable, because those parents neglected at first to receive them as from God, and offer them with all their hearts back to God. Few or no prayers have been said for them; seldom or never has the thought occupied the father's or mother's mind, 'This son or daughter is God's especial gift to me, a soul trusted to me for this very end, that I by the help of the good Spirit might prepare and make it ready for heaven:' and so the poor child has been allowed to grow up pleasing itself, ignorant of God, and to the parents themselves nothing but a reproach and discomfort: in just judgement on their irreligious thoughtlessness: as was said of old time to a father, who had not made a conscience of keeping his children in order: "[m]The man of thine whom I shall not cut off from thine house, shall be to consume thine eyes, and to grieve thine heart." Thus are the children of unthinking parents another very sad instance of Almighty God cursing men's blessings, because they lay them not properly to heart.

[l] Ps. cxxvii. 4. [m] 1 Sam. ii. 33.

What shall we say again of those who have been sick, perhaps nigh unto death, and the Lord has heard the prayers of their friends and of His Church for them, and has raised them up, and restored them to health, but they, alas! have not laid it to heart: they have gone on ever since as worldly, as careless, as forgetful of God as ever: perhaps they have even abused their recovered health and strength in some kind of sinful practice; what can we say of them, unhappy as they are, but that by their sad ingratitude they are even forcing their Almighty Benefactor to curse the blessing which He hath given them: acting just contrary to our blessed Lord's advice: sinning more and more, as if on purpose that a worse thing may come unto them.

And there is something yet sadder and more grievous, more fearful and intolerable by a great deal: i.e. when spiritual blessings, the Word and Sacraments of God and prayer, and whatever helps Christian people may have, if they will, in the Christian Church: when these are unthankfully regarded, not laid to heart; either not used at all, or so coldly and seldom used, as to shew too plainly that they have no deep gratitude within. Well may we imagine it a wonder to the holy Angels, as great a wonder almost as when they beheld some of their own number falling as lightning from heaven, as often as they see unbelievers, in heart and talk, profaning the Divine words of the Bible or the holy prayers of the Church, or still worse, eating the Bread and drinking the Cup of the Lord unworthily. We know what the Apostle says every such an one eateth and drinketh: and it is the most startling instance, surely, on this side

the grave, of the Lord cursing His people's blessings because they will not lay it to heart. But can any one say it is a rare case? Alas! we have reason to fear it is every where but too common.

And there are other kinds of spiritual blessings, special calls and visitations of various sorts, God turning men's hearts and drawing them towards Himself, some in one way some in another, even as it seemeth Him good: and of these too there is often great danger that the father of lies and mischief may make a corrupt use: for he is ever at hand to whisper, 'How good you are! how dear to our Lord! how certain of His special favour!' and so comes in spiritual pride and presumption, and from that carelessness, and from that most dangerous downfalls. The Corinthians excelling in spiritual gifts were a very remarkable instance. The Apostle was full of care for them, lest Satan should get an advantange of them by means of the very graces in which they abounded. He seems as if he could not speak earnestly enough to them, to warn them that if they had all faith, so as to remove mountains, and had not charity, it would profit them nothing, and that they could not have charity, so long as they allowed themselves to be puffed up and to think well of themselves.

Thus you see plainly that in every kind the very best blessings of God will be blighted and turned into curses, if we do not lay it to heart that they are His blessings; if we either neglect to be thankful for them, or permit ourselves to be, as one may say, presumptuously thankful, as though we were favourite children of the great Father, or had done so well as to be somehow entitled to His blessing.

I doubt not that each one of us who has lived any time in the world, might remember if he would, special providences, dealings of Almighty God with himself, which at the time he was more or less aware of, but neglected to lay them to heart: turns of fortune, as they are called; unexpected meetings, escapes, recoveries from sickness, wants supplied, fears relieved, judgements, that seemed impending, mercifully withdrawn, the thing which we greatly feared on the very point of coming upon us, and stayed and turned into comfort we knew not how—which of us, were his life to be written, would not be found to have his portion of such most tender fatherly visitations? and which of us, alas! but would need to humble himself for not having rightly laid them to heart? Which of us again would not have to acknowledge to the glory of God's aweful goodness, that His threatening has more or less come to pass? The blessing unworthily received, if not made a curse, has at least been greatly embittered to him in this present world: there has been a sad remembrance, a nauseous drop in our cup, alloying the very best of our joy and gladness.

From time to time He has crowned the year with His goodness, and His clouds have indeed dropped fatness and abundance upon us, our barns have been filled with plenty, but what if we have made such great mercy an occasion of sin, as too many have done before now? Too often, when we have eaten and were full, we have forgotten the Lord our God, and the words which were spoken to Jerusalem might have been too truly spoken to us: "[n] Behold,

[n] Ezekiel xvi. 49. 48.

this was the iniquity of thy sister Sodom; pride, fulness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in the midst of her, but Sodom thy sister hath not done, as thou hast done." "Fulness of bread,"—it is Gods good gift; how sad to think what a train of sin and misery men's perverseness has connected with it: and I suppose it would be true to say, that as the world goes on and becomes bodily more comfortable to live in year after year, by the many discoveries and inventions of which we hear continually; so the temptations to forget God increase, and we are more and more reminded of that saddest token of the last days, "[o] when the Son of Man cometh, shall He find the Faith on the earth?"

But if the wickedness of corrupt man can thus turn blessings into curses, because he will not lay them to heart, we are equally sure on the other hand, that if we *do* in earnest lay to heart His just and merciful dealing with us, He will turn curses into blessings: after the pattern of that great and saving turn which He gave to the original curse on fallen man: [p] causing us to be saved by that child-bearing which was in the first instance the token of His wrath toward our mother; and by that death, which came into the world at first as His sentence on sinners. So it will be, if we accept His gracious offers, in every instance in which we may have provoked Him to curse our blessings. If we take the curse rightly, in a true penitential spirit, He will turn it back again into the blessing which at first He intended for us, or even a greater one. Judas' blessing was turned into a curse: the more merciful

[o] S. Luke xviii. 8. [p] 1 Tim. ii. 15.

He is to us, the deeper, in one sense, ought be to our fear; but there was one close to His Cross, whose curse was turned into a blessing, because he truly laid it to heart; he attended to what his Lord was doing for his soul, he turned to Christ in true faith and contrition; and he is now with Him in Paradise.

The sum of all then is, Consider your ways, and the ways of God toward you: for he that considereth, shall by God's help turn his curse into a blessing: but he that will not lay things to heart, the best blessing will prove to him a curse.

SERMON XIII.

CHRISTIAN FORBEARANCE.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Eph. iv 2.

"*Forbearing one another in love.*"

THERE is hardly a word more thought of at present, especially among us English people, than the word "toleration." Many, very many there are, who seem to think more of that than of any thing else in their judgements of others. If a man be a *tolerant*, or as it is sometimes called, a *liberal* person, plenty of people may be found to praise and admire him without asking any further: if he be supposed illiberal or intolerant, nothing will make up for it, he is condemned at once.

But these two hard and disagreeable words, "illiberal" and "intolerant," as well as the words which sound most contrary to them, the pleasant words "liberal" and "tolerant," do not at all mean the same things, when they are used by different persons. Liberal and tolerant are like a good many other words, they have a good meaning and a bad one. For what, in fact, is the meaning of the word "tolerant?"

It signifies just this, Bearing with things and persons which are or seem to be wrong. Now there is a way of doing this which is wicked and ungodly, and there is a way of doing it which is merciful, and dutiful, and Christian. We bear with wrong things and bad people in a wicked ungodly way, when we so do it, as carelessly to encourage sin and unbelief, and the things which God abhors. We bear with wrong provoking things in a dutiful Christian way, when we try to keep ourselves calm for Christ's sake, putting down the risings of anger and discontent, and turning them, as well as we can, into prayer: and of course, if we be so inwardly minded, we shall be gentle and considerate in all our outward behaviour, making the best of things, and endeavouring to do always as we would have others do to us, in little things and in great. This is true toleration: "forbearing one another in love," the duty which the Holy Ghost by the Apostle so earnestly urges on us all (in the epistle for this week;) "I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace."

Now upon this "forbearing one another," I would observe first of all, that it is very far from being, as some might imagine, a mere point of natural temper, a part of that ordinary good-nature, which all, even the worst, practise of themselves in some degree, more or less. To take things easily because we do not care much about them, has very little, surely, to do with patience: to let people go wrong without

concerning ourselves, and so to save ourselves trouble and annoyance, is the very contrary to charity: it is more like that unhappy man, who when God asked him for his brother, replied "I know not, am I my brother's keeper?" Let no man then deceive himself, and imagine that because he just lets persons alone, he is practising such forbearance as the Apostle enjoins: nor let the eager and fretful say, 'I cannot forbear, I cannot bear with vexations: another man might, but it is not in my nature, nor in my way.' No: let our natures, and our ways, be what they may, this forbearance is a thing which God requires of us all alike, as a great point of Christian duty: without it, there is no walking worthy of the vocation wherewith we are called. S. Paul gives us plainly to understand as much. His words are, "I the prisoner of the Lord beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with long-suffering, forbearing one another." You see, our bearing with one another was a thing extremely near the Apostle's heart. He writes as a father to his children in Christ; he seems to say, 'Do not add affliction to my bonds, let me have the comfort of hearing that as you are called Christians, so you behave yourself Christianly, and most especially, that you bear with one another's infirmities.' You know our Master and Saviour hath charged us all to be, like Himself, meek and lowly of heart: now there is no lowliness, no meekness, if men will not be forbearing towards one another. It is all very well for a man to say, 'Yes, I know I am a miserable sinner, I depend on nothing but Christ, I try to cast myself humbly before

Him:' the Apostle seems to say to such an one, 'Well is it if you do so: it is a sure hope, and we can have no other; but mind: you are but deceiving yourself in your notion of humility and lowliness towards our Lord, except you be careful also to bear and deal gently with your brethren.' If you let yourself be scornful or affronted towards them, it shews you to be neither meek nor lowly. And there is another thing, so the Apostle seems to go on, Not forbearing, not bearing with one another, is as contrary to the outward peace and unity of the Church, as it is to inward meekness and lowliness. Therefore, having said "forbearing one another," he goes on to say, "endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. There is one Body and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all." Thus the Holy Spirit gives us to understand, that if we refuse to consider one another and make allowances, we are in fact denying a great doctrine of the Christian Faith, "The Holy Catholic Church, the Communion of saints." And so all experience has shewn and is shewing every day: there would never have been heresy or schism, if Christians would have been careful to bear with one another in love. But because they are discontented and fretful, and will not make the best of things, they are tempted, and tempt others, to separate themselves, and divisions take place in the Body, the members refusing to have the same care of one another.

There must be mutual forbearance, then, among

Christians *as* Christians: and mark what the Apostle adds further: we must forbear one another *in love.* Each is to spare his brother, and enter into his feelings, and make the best of him and not the worst, for this simple reason, Because he loves him. Not from natural sweetness only, and from what people call good-nature: nor yet because it is the best way to win people's hearts, and to do the most good that we can in the world: these things are well enough as far as they go, but they do not come up to the heavenly wisdom which the Holy Spirit is teaching us, when He says, "Forbearing one another in love." Love, Christian love, must be at the heart, otherwise the lesson of forbearance will be too hard for us; we shall never be able to learn it perfectly.

I do not mean that it will be hard to *understand:* every one knows at once what is meant, when we say, "Bear with such and such a person, he is very provoking, but bear with him: bear with him for Jesus Christ's sake," we know and feel the meaning of this, the difficulty is, not to understand but to practise it. Some can command themselves, and be forbearing, when they are tried in great things, but the ordinary temptations of life are too much for them: they would forgive one who had done them a serious wrong, but they allow themselves to be out of temper every day and every hour when they are crossed in little things. Others can bear with opponents and endure contradiction well enough on most subjects, but there are some one or two matters or pursuits on which they have set their hearts, and when anything happens in respect of these, they are carried away, they lose their tempers, and quite

forget the law of love. Others can be kind and patient as long as they see any chance of the offending party's repentance, but if they come to despair of that, they grow reckless; having in their own minds given him up, they care not how they deal with him; and being given up, he is almost sure to grow worse and worse and be entirely lost. Any one in short, who will consider for a moment, will feel that one way or another it is a hard thing, a very hard thing, which the Blessed Saviour requires of us all, when He says, "Bear with one another," endure the folly of this man, the ignorance of that, the restless unstable ways of the other: such an one is rude to those to whom he most owes respect, such another has mean deceitful ways, and you cannot trust a word he says, a third is even base and profligate, and it is your duty to keep him at a distance: yet in some sense you must bear with them all. So Holy Scripture teaches: you are not entirely to give up any one of them: you must bear with them in deed and in word as long as charity to them and others allows, and when you are forced entirely to separate from them, you must still bear with them in thought, still pray for them, still endeavour to love them.

Will any man say that this is too high and too hard, it is beyond nature, no man can bring himself to it? The Bible will tell him that what he says is most true: steadily to bear with one another is indeed beyond *nature*, no *man* can bring himself to it: but it is not beyond *grace*, the *Spirit of God* both can and will bring every man to it, who heartily strives and prays for it. We are quite sure of this:

it is our wisdom then and our duty, not to pass over the words of Holy Scripture, as if they could not mean what they say, because it seems to us impossible, but simply to set ourselves to obey them in the next instance in which we are tried. E. g. after you are gone out of Church, watch for the time when something shall happen to provoke and disturb you: it is sure to happen before long; and when it does happen, be it small or great, remember this word "Forbear," and force yourself to be gentle, force yourself to consider, even when you cannot help being angry, yet force yourself to consider what will be most for the good of the provoking person. Perhaps some very sharp saying, some very cutting word, may come into your head, and you may feel as if it would be a great relief to utter it; yet conscience will tell you it will be provoking to the other, and will only tend to make matters worse. You will leave it unsaid, then; and so far you will fulfil the law of Christ. And this may happen many times a day, and for many days together; the person who so tries you may be in continual intercourse with you, it may be all your life long. '[a] What a weariness!' but never mind: it must not, it cannot be too sore a trial for you, if you will but sincerely use the helps which God has given. You will be able to bear with others, if you will but earnestly remember how you have been borne with, and by Whom. What are the histories of Holy Scripture, what the recollections of our lives, but a continual course of miraculous forbearance, and that for love's sake? The

[a] Mal. i. 13.

Lord came walking in Paradise presently after Adam had sinned, "[b] and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the Presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." The Lord might have passed them by, and then what would have become of them, and of us all? But He was forbearing, He called unto him, and gave him and all of us, another chance: a chance to be saved by penitence and faith in Christ, when we could no longer be saved by innocence. Think again of the history of the Jews: no end of their disobedience and rebellions; as fast as ever He gave them a commandment and shewed them a favour, they seemed to take pride and pleasure in slighting the favour and breaking the commandment: yet He bore with them those forty years in the wilderness, and all the time of the judges and the kings, and through the captivity, and after their return, quite down to the rejection of our Saviour. And, O my brethren, think of our Lord upon earth, what contradictions of sinners He endured against Himself, the whole time that He was among us; how He bore with Herod persecuting Him, and with His own townsmen scorning and trying to cast Him down headlong, and with the Pharisees plotting to bring false charges against Him, and sending spies to try Him with hypocritical questionings and flatteries, and with His disciples' great inconsideration and hardness of heart, and with the selfish insolent ways of those who followed Him not for the miracles but the loaves, and with the ingratitude of those whom He healed, and with the fickleness of the men of

[b] Genesis iii. 8.

Jerusalem, and with the treachery of Judas, and with the mockery, the cruelty, the bitter reproach of the Cross. Remember how He bore with all this, He Who, as the Wise man says, might have destroyed His enemies with "[c] one rough word." Think of Him, e. g. quietly remonstrating with Judas, then in the very act of betraying Him, "[d] Judas, betrayest thou the Son of Man with a kiss?" Think of this, and let the thought help you to be forbearing, the next time you are ill used. Whatever the ill usage be, it can be nothing in comparison of what He had to endure. As therefore you know you ought to bear pain for the sake of His tortures on the Cross, so pray and labour that you may bear ill usage, insolence, disrespect, whatever shocks you in the behaviour of others, for the sake of His betrayal, His chains, cruel mockings, and scourging.

Does it yet seem hard to you? Then remember: remember, and never forget, this one thing more: how very sadly, time after time, you yourself, yea every one of us in his own proper person has tried our Lord's gracious forbearance, and still He has gone on bearing with us. He hath said to His Angels of punishment, again and again, "[e] It is enough, stay now thine hand;" and here we still are, still on our trial, not yet in the place of torment, not yet cast into hell. More than that: we are still in His Church: He permits us to hear and read His Gospel, to pray to Him, to prepare ourselves by true repentance and earnest faith, and so to draw near and receive His own Body and Blood in the holy Sacra-

[c] Wisdom xii. 9. [d] S. Luke xxii. 48. [e] 2 Sam. xxiv. 16.

ment of the Eucharist: He puts it within our reach, and along with it all the helps and instructions we could need to make us worthy partakers of it. It may be, He has from time to time chastened us: very sore and severe His chastisements may have seemed to us at the time. Want, anguish, disappointment, reproach, bereavement, sickness, desolation of spirit: at the time, His Hand seemed heavy upon us indeed: but now, (if we have at all made the right use of His warnings, if we have heard His Voice, and not hardened our hearts: now) we see and thankfully acknowledge the meaning of it all: now we feel and own that in His severest dispensations He was chastening us in measure, because He knew it would be our ruin if He left us wholly unpunished. When we were judged, we were "[f] chastened of the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world." Thus it has been with Him: and how, meanwhile, has it been with each one of us? Our own consciences will answer, if we ask them sincerely: they will say to each one, 'Little indeed, O man, is the good fruit which thou hast borne; overwhelming the heap of sins errors and ignorances, wherewith thou hast requited thy Saviour's fatherly forbearance: and still He has gone on, all perfection as He is, and of purer Eyes than to behold iniquity, still He goes on bearing with thee: and Why? Just because He loves thee. He loveth thee yet with that everlasting love, which caused Him to become Man and die for thee: therefore with these cords of loving-kindness and forbearance hath He drawn and is yet

[f] 1 Cor. xi. 32.

drawing thee; only be thou willingly drawn: refuse not to love Him Who loveth thee so tenderly: and that thou mayest learn to love Him better and better, practise thyself in dealing gently for His sake with all who in any way misuse, molest or annoy thee: as the Apostle describes his Lord's people in another verse, "[g] Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye."

[g] Col. iii. 13.

SERMON XIV.

THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Eph. iv. 3.

"*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*"

ONE part of S. Paul's meaning, in this part of the divine Epistle to the Ephesians, is quite plain to every reader; the earnestness, namely, with which he enforces mutual love, forbearance, and forgiveness. "I, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation with which ye are called: with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love." So far, even the ordinary sort of persons, the world as it is called, would agree with the judgement of the Apostle, however unwilling many may be to practise it. But in the next words, the words of the text, quite a new thought is introduced, a thought into which the world cannot enter. We are directed seriously to endeavour to keep, not simply the bond of peace—so far the world agrees with the Gospel, and is forward to proclaim her agreement,— but we are to keep the Unity of the Spirit by means of this bond of peace. The great end of good-natured well-meaning men of the world, is simply to keep

the peace among their neighbours, as being one of the greatest of earthly blessings. True evangelical Christian charity seeks peace also, and that most earnestly; but she seeks it with a view to a greater blessing; hoping by its means to preserve the Unity of the Spirit; that is, to keep people close to that body, of which Jesus Christ is the Head, and to which they are united by His Spirit. The union and charity, which the world admires is too often a false kind of truce; persons agreeing, for a quiet life, to let one another go on without warning or contradiction, in the worst religious errors, and in neglect of the most sacred and divine duties. But the union and charity, for which the Church instructs us every day to pray, is something which goes far deeper: binding men together, not for the present only, by their agreeing to say nothing about their differences, but for all time, nay for eternity, by actually rendering them of one mind in regard of the highest and holiest truths. For this real and solid union, the Church instructs us to pray daily. I mean in the collect for all conditions of men, wherein every evening of his life the considerate worshipper beseeches Almighty God, 'that all who profess and call themselves Christians, may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.' Not only in the bond of peace and in righteousness of life, but also in unity of spirit, and this, in maintenance of the true Faith. There are some who think this impossible; considering the various opinions and tempers of mankind on all subjects, they say it is out of the question, ever prevailing on them to serve God in Christ with one

consent. But the Church evidently does not think it impossible, otherwise she would not have taught us to beg it as a blessing of God every day of our lives. Neither did S. Paul think it impossible: else he would not have besought the Corinthians, "[a] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that there might be no division among them; but, that they should all not only speak the same thing, but also be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgement." An admonition as strange and unreasonable, on the notions of those who think religious differences impossible to be avoided, and therefore not so very blameable, as if the Apostle had directed us all to think the same colours beautiful, the same tastes pleasant, the same sounds harmonious. There must of course be some great mistake in a way of judging so inconsistent with the language and meaning of the Holy Spirit. Nor is the mistake hard to be pointed out. It is just this: that people judge of things by the rules and measures of the world instead of the Gospel. They do not believe, or do not remember, that the Holy Spirit of God is at hand to help men in being of one mind; that He really did keep the Church united in all material things, and with only partial and occasional exceptions, for the first six hundred years and more.

For indeed the Gospel and Church of our Lord Jesus Christ has this among its especial privileges, that it makes all things so entirely one: just as one especial curse of the Antichristian power, the world, the enemy of the Gospel, is continual division and separation of what else was united. "Jerusalem,"

[a] 1 Cor. i. 10.

says the Holy Psalmist, "is built as a city that is at unity in itself." But the very name of the world, or city of God's enemies, is Babel, or confusion: its curse, from the beginning, was to be divided and scattered into all the nations of the earth; to be broken into a thousand peoples, speaking as many different languages, and no two of them understanding each other. The men of this world have each their own object, and that, changing from time to time according to their humours, fancy, or momentary profit. The young irreligious man has one object, the old another, the middle-aged another: and truly even in this world they often feel it a fearful judgement to be torn, and distracted, and pulled, as it were, different ways by their wavering, inconsistent passions, and fancies. So, that in this as in other more frightful senses, that is found true which the Prophet repeatedly declares, "There is no peace, nor rest, saith my God, to the wicked." On the other hand, it is the blessing of the worthy members of God's kingdom, to be at unity, first each man with himself and then all men one amongst another. The whole mind and temper is formed, the whole inclination of the man is swayed, by one great overpowering principle, swallowing up all the rest: that is, the desire of pleasing God in Christ Jesus. This makes the good Christian, however weak and ignorant in other respects, a noble, steady, consistent character; he knows always which way he is to look, what rule he must abide by, and what example he must follow. All things to him are drawn as it were into one point: and as long as he keeps that steadily and devoutly in view, he knows that he cannot miss it; he must be

continually making progress, whether he feel it himself or no.

Hitherto I have been speaking of the blessing of that unity, which Christian holiness secures to each person inwardly within his own heart and mind. But S. Paul in the text had chiefly an eye to the unity of the Church, or of Christians one amongst another. For after enjoining us each one in particular to try and keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, thus he goes on; "There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;. one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all." All these are so many circumstances in the situation of a Christian man, so many reasons why he should practise the Christian duty just before enjoined, of endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit. Let us briefly consider the meaning and force of each of them.

"There is One Body," that is, the Body of Jesus Christ. The Church Apostolical throughout the whole world is really though mystically united to our Lord and Saviour, and in virtue of that most divine and mysterious union, is entitled to be fed with His Flesh and Blood in the Holy Sacrament of the Eucharist. As surely then as there is but one Christ, and as all the children of Adam have the same need of being mystically united to Him, if ever they would escape the curse of Adam, so surely is there but one Body, into which we are all engrafted. And to say that God is equally well pleased with all the various bodies calling themselves Christians, provided all are equally sincere, equally moral and charitable

in their conduct, is the same absurdity as if you should say, there are more Christs than one, to whom we may be spiritually united, and God has given power to every man to choose his own.

Again, "there is but one Spirit," the Spirit of Christ poured largely on His mystical Body the Church, even as it dwelt without measure in His visible mortal Body, when here among us. By the heavenly assistance and power of that good Spirit in Holy Baptism, we are translated out of that solitude in which we were born, a miserable, forlorn, helpless condition; we are taken from ourselves, that is, from the power of darkness, and are anointed and pressed, as it were, into one mass, with Him Who is the channel of true and healthful grace. Dare any one be so profane as to reckon that the Holy ever Blessed Comforter, animates and quickens alike those who are joined to the true Body of Christ, and those who are as yet separated from Him? It cannot be; it is an affront to Christ to say so, making out His precious Blood to have been shed in vain. I beseech you, therefore, let us never allow ourselves, out of a false and unkind charity, to think lightly of the difference between those who truly have Christ's Sacraments, are thoroughly joined to His mystical Body, and those who have them not, or having, care not to use them. We might by the same rule go on to think lightly of the difference between heathens and Christians; between those who have, and those who want the blessed hope of everlasting life. For so the Apostle tells us by his manner of proceeding, "There is one body, and one Spirit, *even as* ye are called in one hope of your calling." As much as

to say, You find no difficulty in acknowledging that we have all but one hope. All Christians, all the world over, look to one and the same heaven, prepared for all alike by the mercy of the same Saviour. Now, then, take it for a certain truth, that on earth there is but one Church, one only Body, quickened by one only Spirit, which is ordained to nurse and to prepare men for that everlasting abode. This you must believe, as surely as you believe the other; although in some respects, you may find it a harder point. For the happy state of the redeemed hereafter is a thing so entirely out of sight, that if we have faith to believe it at all, there is no additional difficulty in believing, that to all, in kind, it is one and the same. All will shine with the same sort of heavenly light, however one star may differ from another star in glory. But when we are called on to believe the Holy Catholic Church here on earth, we find it hard to believe that persons whom we see with our eyes to be in many respects so distant, so utterly unconnected with each other, and quite unaware, most commonly, of each other's existence; sometimes, perhaps, still more painfully separated by jealousies and suspicions which will hereafter vanish away; we find it hard to believe that Christians now living are, not merely in a figure of speech, but by a real mysterious work of God's Holy Spirit, joined with the departed people of all times, in one holy universal body, as truly as the limbs of our own bodies are joined in one. This I say, is especially hard to believe, because so many of the persons, concerning whom we are to believe it, are continually in our sight; and there is little or nothing, as we look at them, which naturally leads us to cou-

sider them as so joined in one blessed company. Nevertheless, says S. Paul, you must believe this of all Christians, on the same ground as you believe that the same heaven is provided for all. There must be unity in grace here, to prepare men for unity in glory hereafter.

And to bring this still more home to our minds, the Apostle goes on and reckons up many other things which all Christians know to be the very same to all. There is "one Lord" Jesus Christ, by Whom are all things, and we by Him: "one Faith," that of the Holy Trinity, as set forth in the Creeds of the Church, into which Faith we were all baptized: "one Baptism," once for all, administered to every Christian soul and body, with water and the regenerating Spirit, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Last, "there is one God and Father of all, Who is above all, and through all, and in you all:" the mysterious, unspeakable Centre or point, in Whom, if we may so say, meet all the various rays or streams of glory, connecting this visible earth with the highest heaven,—Who is, indeed, All in all. God is perfect unity: and let us not doubt that His Church, the most perfect of His works in this fallen earth, is also perfectly one, whatever appearances there may now be to the contrary.

But the more this heavenly and spiritual union of all Christians in one body is out of sight, and above understanding, the more necessary it is that we should be continually put in mind of it. Having once learned it (as we all have in the Apostles' Creed) we should never allow ourselves to forget it; else we shall be often doing many things, in care-

lessness or in ignorance, most contrary to this divine unity. Therefore the Apostle lays such stress on the word "endeavouring" in the text; "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace:" that is, making a serious object of it: looking to Church union and communion distinctly, as one great purpose of our lives. Do Christians in general, do we ourselves, attend as we ought to this precept of the Holy Ghost? Do not a good many, even of the well-disposed, rather behave as if Church union would come of itself, without any care of theirs, provided they be in their several ways honest, sober, and devout? The bond of peace they understand, and perceive the benefits of it: but the unity of the Spirit is a matter of faith, not of sight; they either never think of it at all, or dismiss it at once out of their minds, saying, it is above them, and all they can do, is to live quietly among their neighbours of all sorts. Somewhat of this sort, I think, must be in people's minds, when they so quietly allow themselves, week after week, and festival after festival, to be content without waiting on God in His own holy house. Let us not deceive ourselves: it seems a simple thing, to attend on the prayers regularly offered there, and kneel before God, and sing His praise, and call upon Him in the appointed words, and in the appointed place: yet nothing is more certain, than that every voluntary absence from these solemn assemblies is so far a breach of Christian unity, a neglect and forfeiture of the communion of saints. Consider it as a privilege, rather than as a duty, and you will perceive, that, in what I have now said, I am not going beyond

the truth. Do not say, it is no where set down in Scripture, that we must go to Church so very regularly; what great difference can it make, my going rather seldomer than I might, missing this or that opportunity? but say this rather, I know that whenever I go there, whether on Sundays or on week-days, I am where Christ has promised to be, among two or three gathered together in His name; I know that it must be a blessed privilege to be near Him, whether I feel edified and comforted at the time, or no: I will, therefore, by God's grace, walk according to this faith, and not suffer any frivolous, unnecessary engagement, nor yet any cold heartless calculation of just how much is my absolute duty, to keep me from Christ's solemn assemblies, which, rightly used, are so many steps towards heaven. Is there any thing in this way of thinking, unworthy of a sound faith or of a reasonable piety? Is it not rather in exact agreement with those Scriptures, which teach us that the whole of the spiritual life is a matter of faith, not of sight, or feeling; and that the blessed Gospel is a law of liberty, according to which, whatever is done, is best done when joyfully and willingly offered, not exacted as a wearisome duty?

By what has been now said, one question is sufficiently answered, which many persons may naturally be ready to ask, when such obligations are pressed on them, as this of keeping the unity of the Spirit. It may come into their minds, 'What can I do; I who am no clergyman, but a mere private Christian, towards so great an object as this, of keeping the Church at unity in itself?' In answer to this, I would remind

you of those many Scriptures in which the Church of Christ is represented as a holy building or temple, whereof the materials are, not earthly stones, but the sanctified and regenerated souls and bodies of Christians; living stones, as S. Peter entitles us all, forming one spiritual household. Now this description belongs to every one of us; to the humblest little Christian child as truly as to the chiefest Apostle: each is, as it were, but a single stone in the building although the Apostles and their successors be indeed foundation stones, whereas the others only hold their place in the building, as God has set them, here and there. So far then the layman or the child has the same duty with the Apostle, that is, to maintain his post in the building; and not to loosen it, as the withdrawing of any stone must do. He must, therefore, adopt the same ways with the Apostle, of keeping himself in the Church, and so far keeping the Church one. Now, how the Apostles kept themselves in the Church, we know by their own accounts in the Acts and Epistles: they continued daily in breaking of bread and in prayer; they kept under their bodies by fasting, and brought them into subjection; they were very diligent in recommending, in all ways, that Christians should keep up their solemn assemblies; they never, for a moment, thought of themselves as of single unconnected persons, but always, as of members of Christ's body, stones in the holy temple, the Church. So, then, ought we to act and think, if we would do our part in the great work and kingdom of our God and of His Christ. Humble though it be in comparison, it is yet our part; and it is to be done as the Apostles did theirs, by great

exactness in outward communion, so far as our circumstances allow, and by constantly remembering the Church in our prayers at home, and in the education of her children, and in the discharge of our household duties.

And let it not be thought, that in thus recommending great exactness in outward communion, we are setting up the form above the substance, the body of religion above the spirit. Our outward communion, if we come with devout minds, is indeed real spiritual worship; it is the very way by which God has promised to bestow on us the treasures of spiritual grace. Consider the several Church Services in their order, how between them they make provision for all that an immortal but fallen spirit can need to bring it at once into communion with God, and keep it so for ever. First, regenerating grace comes by Holy Baptism, whereby as infants, being once for all made partakers of the atoning blood of our Redeemer, and sanctified by His Holy Spirit, we need afterwards from time to time only supplies and renewals of the same grace; which supplies and renewals are afforded by laying on of hands in Confirmation, by continual prayer at home, and in solemn assemblies; by fasting in due season, and, most of all, by the Holy Eucharist. Now every one of these duties has something in it outward as well as inward and spiritual; the body has a part to perform in them as well as the soul. For even in the most retired private prayer, the very act of "sitting alone and keeping silence," is such as cannot be performed without the body; and therefore it is in vain for persons to draw a distinction between out-

ward and spiritual services, as if the latter could be at all perfect without the other. More especially it is the height of presumption for any one to think of continuing a lively member of Christ's body, without receiving that which is the very principle of union in that body, the flesh and blood of our Lord in the Holy Eucharist. S. Paul has taught us to consider this as the very cement of the Christian building, the essence as it were which runs throughout the whole mass, and gives life and spirit to all. For he has said, "We being many, are one bread and one body; for we are all partakers of that one bread." As much as to say, that if we have not our share in that bread, if we refuse our part in that communion, we have no reason to think that we are one body: we are left single as it were and unsupported, to bear the burthen of our many sins and miseries. The wise and excellent Bishop Wilson had so strong a feeling of the necessity of the Holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper to our being lively members of Christ's body, as to have left it on record that he should have been even afraid to pray, if he were not in the habit of receiving the Holy Communion.

Such as were the thoughts and practice of that good Bishop, such was the judgement and practice of the universal Church in the first and best ages. All baptized Christians, at least all of full age, were then communicants, except such as were under the censures of the Church, and were doing penance to prepare themselves for communion bye and bye. All were communicants; and one blessed consequence was, that the unity of the Spirit was kept in such great

perfection as it is hard for us to imagine in our days. The Holy Church throughout all the world was one living and feeling body; feeling, I say, throughout its extent whatever happened to any part or extremity of it. The Christians in Asia sympathized with the Christians of Rome, both in their joys and in their sorrows: they made known to one another the trials and dangers which they underwent in defence of the common Truth; they prayed and gave thanks for one another; they warned one another against heresies and errors: they fought the battles of our Lord and His Cross, though at a great earthly distance, yet with one heart and one mind.

Let us endeavour, each in his station, to serve God in His Church as regularly, as punctually, as humbly, as they did: and when we cannot serve Him in His Church, yet to remember the Church at home; and no doubt, unworthy as we are, our blessing will be like theirs. We may never see what they saw, on earth, the Church universal of one accord, of one mind; but we may hope to see in heaven, through the merits of Him Who hath purchased for us every blessing; through Him, I say we may hope to see in heaven, that of which even the first and best Church was a faint shadow and emblem, the unity of the Spirit, kept perfectly in the bond of everlasting peace.

SERMON XV.

THE LOWEST PLACE OUR PROPER PLACE.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. Luke xiv. 10.

"When thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room."

You heard out of the Gospel just now, how our Lord was at a meal in the house of one of the chief Pharisees. It was on the Sabbath day; and they were watching Him: i. e. were observing His conduct, whether He should say or do anything which they might pretend was breaking the law of the Sabbath. This, as you know, was the usual custom of the Pharisees. They hated our Lord's teaching, because it was so real and true, so searching and impartial. It touched their secret and unsuspected faults, it gave them the notion, (as the truth was indeed,) that He Who could so address them knew all the dark and shameful corners of their hearts, that they could not sin in solitude and be safe from Him, and this they could not bear. Therefore they set themselves against the Holy Child Jesus, Whom God had sent to be their and our Saviour, and there being a man there that had the dropsy, they, instead of earnestly hoping

and praying, as in common charity they should have done, that some good thing might come to that poor man from Jesus Christ, were observing what He said and did, that they might repeat it afterwards, and make it seem wrong, and so get an advantage of Him. This was their plan: I wish there may be never anything like it in the proceedings of Christian people, when they are hearing a Christian sermon from a person whom they know not or care not to hear. At such times we are too apt to be very severe, all of us, on anything we have heard, which might appear to sound amiss. We look for faults in the preacher or teacher, instead of accepting the help which God sends us through him to find out our own faults and repent of them. Let people at least understand that in so doing they are no better than the Pharisees: they are just following the example of the bitterest and most hateful enemies of our Lord.

The Gospel goes on to tell us, how that our Lord, well knowing what was in the hearts of the persons around Him, rebuked them in two several ways. First, having healed the poor dropsical man, He put them in mind what their own conduct would be, how they without scruple would break the rest of the Sabbath for a much less reason: "[a] Which of you," He said, "shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the Sabbath day? And they could not answer Him again to these things." They could not deny, that of course they would on the Sabbath give help to a fallen beast: and then, how could they blame Him for helping a distressed brother or sister? Thus He rebuked them

[a] S. Luke xiv. 5.

for their perverse and unbelieving hearts. But He did more, He shewed them the cause also, why they were so perverse and unbelieving, and how they might at once, if they would, begin to mend. The cause of their unbelief, in one word, was their natural pride and self-sufficiency. How did our Lord reprove them for this? In a very remarkable yet a very simple way. He marked at the meal where He was, how they were choosing out the chief rooms, i. e. the highest, most convenient, most honourable places. Every one was pressing to be above his neighbour, and of course it made great confusion. And our Divine Master, looking on, turned it, as His manner was, into a kind of parable about eternal things. "When thou art bidden or invited of any man to a wedding or any other great feast, sit not down in the highest room." This was what the Pharisees of all men were especially apt to do, and no doubt they were so behaving at the very feast where our Saviour then was. They loved the highest places in the synagogues, and the chief rooms at feasts. Our Lord in another place accuses them generally of it, and they were now practising it before His Eyes. And He takes occasion from this their pride to teach us all a lesson of humility. As if He should say, "See them, how rudely and selfishly they behave, choosing out all the best places for themselves, helping themselves to the best of everything: do you not feel how wrong, how disagreeable it is, how it makes every one wish to put them down: do you then learn and study to behave better." And indeed we all know what a difference there is in this matter between different persons' behaviour, both at home

and abroad, and we know how we feel towards them: we cannot help it. There is not a man in the world but feels the wide difference between a courteous modest man, who forgets himself and constantly makes room for others, and a rude selfish over-bearing person, who sets himself up, if he may be allowed, above all the rest of the company. We cannot bear such a man, and we are naturally glad when he is put down. This is what our Lord's words literally teach: but is this *all* their meaning? Did He merely intend to instruct us in a point of good manners and of courtesy, to be practised in our ordinary meetings on earth? No, far from it: He had a deep and spiritual meaning, a meaning which concerns us all through all eternity. Let us consider it a little distinctly. First, we are, all of us, invited to a wedding, i. e. to the marriage of the great King's Son, to the kingdom of God and Christ, to all the blessings and privileges of the Church of God. We are invited to present ourselves, first as candidates for holy Baptism or Confirmation, and having been so accepted, then afterwards for growth in grace, and that in prayer and all ordained means; but most especially in Holy Commnnion. Well, these are great things, they are some of the highest and best of things, but it is no vanity, no conceit, no greediness in our seeking these things, being that God has expressly commanded us. Too often, I fear, it is but a mock humility, when persons invited to Holy Communion which is the Feast of all feasts, say they dare not, they are not worthy. It sounds very humble, but it is in reality quite the contrary. To say, we dare not, we will not come, when God plainly commands

us, is setting up our own judgement against His: and if anything is proud and irreligious, that surely is so. So far then is plain in the parable. We are bidden to a spiritual wedding, that betwixt Christ and His Church, and we must obey the call, unless we are content to do without Christ and without God in the world. So far is plain. We are invited and we must go. I wish those of you to consider this, my brethren, who have hitherto turned away from the Holy Communion without stopping to examine really what their duty is in the matter. It will be no good excuse for non-attendance, to say, I quieted myself by saying in my heart—just *saying*, hardly *considering*, I am unworthy. As I said before, this is unbelief, though it take the tone of humility. Beware of it, dear brethren, for it is a very subtle snare.

But our Lord says not only, Go and sit down, but also, "sit down *in the lowest room.*" The lowest room? the very lowest of all? Is that what we are to choose out, and sit down in, if so be we may find it? It would seem so, for so our Saviour openly bids us. "Go and sit down in the lowest room." Nor is it hard to see what this means. S. Paul, you know, calls himself the chief of sinners: and bids every single one of us, in lowliness of mind to esteem others better than himself. Each one, when he compares himself with any of his brethren, is to turn his mind to that special thing, in which that brother excels him. And there is always sure to be some point or other of the kind. However great and wise we may think ourselves, and be in the eye of the world, and however mean and worthless and low our neighbours may be, yet there is certain to be

some one point or more in which we should be glad to change places with him, in which he is really superior to us: and searching out these matters, and dwelling upon them, is in fact taking the lowest room; it is giving up freely any advantage you seem to have; it is owning yourself, as the patriarch Jacob did, "[b] Less than the least of God's mercies:" or as the Apostle S. Paul did, "[c] Less than the least of all saints." To have this feeling constantly settled in one's heart is indeed a great and rare virtue. To speak well of it, and to profess it, is very easy: very easy in words to call one's self the chief of sinners, but really and constantly to *mean it*, is perhaps one of the hardest exercises of virtue: and it has a great blessing accordingly. He who makes himself really lowest, and not only pretends to do so, has first of all the express promise of Almighty God to be made highest of all. "[d] Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven." And, "[e] to sit on My right Hand, and on My left"—to have the two highest places in the kingdom, "is not Mine to give" partially, as kings on earth are accustomed to do, "but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of My Father:" and who are they? He tells us: "[f] If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all." "For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." And "[g] He hath regarded the lowliness of His handmaiden" the Mother of Jesus. Lowliness is that special grace which recommends us most

[b] Gen. xxxii. 10. [c] Eph. iii. 8. [d] S. Matt. xviii. 4.
[e] S. Matt. xx. 23. [f] S. Mark ix. 35. [g] S. Luke i. 48.

especially to the regard and favour of our God. It recommends us also, most especially, to the favour and respect of all the good and glorious spirits, our fellow creatures, Angels and Saints, who are in God's household and about His royal throne: just as the contrary, pride and conceit, and taking all the best to one's self, causes them all to dislike such persons and draw back from their society. The parable sets it all before us, as in a picture. Here is a great feast, and the guests assembling: the Master of the feast also watching to see how each one behaves as he comes in. If in such a case you saw one of the guests coming in rudely and arrogantly and taking the highest place he could get, you know how you would feel towards such an one. If on the other hand you saw one coming in very gently and reverently, and quietly taking up with the lowest place he could find, you would presently be interested in that man: you would wish him well, you would respect him outwardly and inwardly. The master would say, "Friend, come up higher," and the guests would be glad to hear him say so. In like manner the holy Angels and Saints will one day or other come to know the full amount of that humility which is practised daily by Christ's faithful servants on earth: they will enter into the mind of Christ: whom He honours, they will delight to honour: they will give that man *worship*, I mean respect and praise, as they sit together at Christ's Table. As Job's friends did when they were reconciled to him, when they were sure by God's own gracious interference, of Job's innocency and of his lowliness; when they heard how he professed himself vile and said he would lay

his hand upon his mouth, they "[h] gave him a piece of money, and every one an earring of gold:" so the good spirits of every kind, are preparing crowns and palms for such as are truly endeavouring evermore to take the lowest rooms. The time is coming when all men shall speak well of him who hath not only spoken but really thought ill of himself. It is a hard duty, but it is encouraged and blessed in proportion to its hardness.

Yet in one way of looking at it, humbleness might seem as if it ought not to be so hard, it is such plain common sense. For what after all is this great virtue of humbleness, but simply to know the real truth concerning yourself? Suppose a person coming to the royal Feast in the Lord's Parable, not only not having, as He says, a wedding garment, but altogether clad in most foul, loathsome, horrible rags: would it be any great matter, my brethren, if such an one drew back and sought out the lowest place? How could he have the heart to do otherwise? Yet this in good truth is naturally the very description of what each one of us sinners is doing, now that we are approaching God's Altar. I say *naturally*, for although we may hope, by His extreme mercy, that such is not our *actual* condition, yet we know that we have been such, and we know also that we are even now full of the seeds of it all, we know it too well by our outbreaks in thought word and deed, many of us more so by our own grievous sin. Well might we fear to come at all, but we dare not stay away; what remains but to come to the lowest place and if we take that place in earnest there, we shall of

[h] Job. xlii. 11.

course take it every where else, not outwardly, but in heart. Since we have the highest preferment forced, as it were, upon us, we shall the more humble ourselves where we can. And this will be the happiest as well as the best way; for what is the lowest place in very deed? It is the foot of the Cross. And if it seem hard to flesh and blood, think what it will be and is, to be made much of by Angels and Saints there, and for its sake rejoice to give up being a favourite with sinful men here.

SERMON XVI.

A LESSON OF HUMILITY.

SEVENTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Ps. cxxxi. 2.

"Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child."

Our attention is drawn to-day to the virtue of humility, by the Church selecting for her Gospel our Lord's parable about those who chose out the chief rooms. This may naturally remind us of His other earnest recommendation of that virtue: indeed we may truly say, that He has sown the world with remembrances and tokens of it. Look which way you will, something meets your eye to remind you that Christ would have you think nothing of yourself; that all your wisdom, and strength, and glory, from beginning to end, is another's. The buds and flowers teach you Who provides for you; servants waiting upon their masters put us in mind of Him, Who was come from God and went to God, washing His disciples' feet; a shepherd with his flock is an image of Him coming down from heaven to seek the lost sheep; nay, the very disputes, the presumptuous, the conceited and arrogant ways, of which the world

around us is so full, may do us this good, that they may remind us of our Lord's rebukes to those whom He saw behaving conceitedly and presumptuously; if we see people crowding to the best place, we may recollect what He said to those who chose out the chief rooms; if any person talk as if he prided himself on his devotion, we may remember the Pharisee and the Publican; and so of many other places. A person who knows the four Gospels at all, can hardly look any way in the world, without seeing somewhat to remind him that "every one who exalteth himself shall be abased, and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

But of all Christ's tokens in favour of humility, there are none surely so plain or so affecting, as those which arise out of the comparison of a good Christian to a little child. Children are continually around us, and most people, whether themselves be parents or no, are not a little interested in them; it is aweful therefore, as well as encouraging, to think that in every one we see a kind of manifestation of our Lord and Saviour, a token of His presence, and memorial of His will. Whether it be a child in a cradle, it puts us in mind of Him as the shepherds found Him at Bethlehem; or in its mother's arms, it is an image of Him when His holy mother presented Him in the temple; or if brought to Church, either to Holy Baptism or afterwards, it is then a remembrancer of those little ones, whom He took up in His arms, and blessed; or if it be old enough to talk and say lessons, then we think of the child whom He took and set in the midst, and bade His disciples humble themselves, even as that little child.

In these ways the comparison of the Christian mind to a little child is familiar to all, who know their Gospels at all; but the manner in which it is set before us in the Psalm from which the text is taken, is rather different from any of these which have been mentioned, and is well worth our particular consideration to-day.

For you will observe that it is not simply a little child, which the Holy Ghost by the prophet David holds out to us here as a pattern and figure of right behaviour in a certain respect, but it is a *weaned* child. The expression comes twice over in the same verse, so that we cannot be wrong in supposing that it is this which we are particularly to regard.

A child then just weaned, just used to do without its mother's breast, and to live upon other kinds of food, is a token and pattern to us of something or other which God would have us do. Nor is it hard to find what the lesson is to be here learned. Consider what the condition of a child is when just beginning to be weaned: it is, in fact, just beginning to be denied what it likes, and to feel discipline; it has to go through an irksome process, more or less of trouble and vexation, every meal that it takes. By degrees it becomes used to this, and its little angry and fretful ways abate; and those who watch it carefully, with an eye at all like a mother's, may perceive it, before long, beginning even to manage itself, stopping its tears, and refraining from certain things which it knows will be most likely to bring them, and in many ways shewing that it has certain struggles within, and for one reason or another is striving more or less to get the mastery over its own feelings.

Now this, I suppose, is the sort of process which the holy Psalmist describes in the text, "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, like as a child that is weaned from his mother." I have used arts and contrivances to keep myself in order, like the instructive ways which Providence teaches children to use, when they now cease to be mere babies, and feel, one way or another, that they must not, and cannot, have all their own will.

This, the Psalmist says, he did: and the Psalmist we know speaks in the person of the Body of Christ, the Church, and of each member of it. When he says, I do this and that good thing, it is not to be understood as though it were David, or any other particular person, who wrote the Psalm, praising himself, but it is Christ's voice telling us what He was, and what He would have His people be. Christ here tells us that He would have us all behave and quiet ourselves, as a child that is weaned from his mother.

Observe now to what this comes. First, it seems to signify that at best we are but children here, and have need to deal carefully, and in a manner cunningly, with ourselves, in order to keep ourselves in any thing like proper control. We know how we manage children, how difficult an art it is, how much experience and thought it requires to do it thoroughly, so as neither to disgust nor spoil them; so as not only to get them to what at the moment we require of them, but also to improve by degrees their general temper, and manners, and behaviour. Well then, the Psalm seems to teach us that we had need practise the same sort of skill in the manage-

ment and ordering of our own thoughts and ways; turning our attention away, even by force, from those things which we know are apt to move us too strongly, and trying every innocent art and device to keep ourselves from dwelling with any kind of pleasure and indulgence on the sin which we know most easily besets us.

Next, the Psalm seems to tell us, that as Christians we must be *weaned* children; we must not live on mere milk any longer, but must be trying at least to use ourselves to stronger meat, the meat of those who are no more babes, but are growing towards Christian perfection. This should be considered more than it is: for the Apostle speaks in an alarming way of those, who, when for the time they should be teachers, have need to be taught again the first principles: that is, who have been baptized and confirmed, but have forgotten, practically forgotten, the very first and plainest truths of their baptismal vow. He seems to say, they are getting towards a condition, in which it will be impossible to do them good: and yet, how many are contented, if they have not quite cast by the milk which Christ provides for His very little ones!

And the reason is plain; the process, as in weaning, is more or less painful, irksome, and self-denying. If you would have a right practical understanding, I do not say a scholar's notion, or a kind of knowledge which will express itself in exact words, but if you will have such a sort of knowledge of Christ's truth, as He intended even the poor of His flock to have, you must lay down strict rules for yourself, you must continually refuse to indulge

your own fancy, even when the thing seems no great harm; you must keep the customs and laws and regulations of the Church, even when you see no great use in them. For so children get used by degrees to a manlier and more strengthening diet and way of life. If they were to stop always to have the reason explained to them, why this or that thing was necessary, they would grow up unimproved, the time in which they should have been obeying good advice being all spent in pretending to learn the reasons of it.

So it is and ever has been with Christians, whenever they have refused to submit themselves to the Church's teaching; if they have not gone positively astray, at least they have continued babes all their life long; ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

We have seen that a good deal may be learned concerning our Christian duty, especially self-command, submission, and humility, by watching the instinctive ways of weaned children: now let us recollect what that age becomes, when it is made perverse and froward by foolish indulgence, or wayward and ill-tempered severity, or mere neglect; recollect, in a word, what a spoiled child is; (I wish we had further to go for examples of them;) and you will understand something of the ways of going on, which the Holy Spirit in the text would guard you against. A spoiled child is one, who has been used to make his mere will and pleasure his rule: "I like such and such a thing, therefore it must be so: I do not like such another, therefore it must not be so:" this has been constantly passing in his mind; instead of

behaving and quieting himself, he has been used even to make himself outrageous and miserable, for the sake of obtaining what he wanted. Who does not know what sort of a character this ends in, if the mischief be not somehow abated by the good providence of Almiglity God?

Now the Psalmist's train of thought would lead us to reflect on this certain and aweful truth, that by our self-will and self-indulgence we spoil ourselves, make ourselves unfit for heaven, and hateful and contemptible in the sight of the holy Angels; just as children, brought up in ways so little childlike, become unfit for useful employments, and disagreeable to all the good and wise arouud them. When we see a spoiled child, we see a parable, a sure token, of that disobedient, wilful, self-pleasing temper, which is the very opposite to the temper of Christ and His members, as it is described in this Psalm: we see a kind of image, on a small scale, of what the Evil spirit will bring us to, our very selves, if we refuse to behave and quiet ourselves, to be guided by serious and self-denying rules.

The likeness and the warning become more exact and fearful, as we suppose the person more left to himself. The greater number of persons in all ranks, it is to be feared, spoil their children, more or less, if not in any other way, yet by selfish indolence, which prevents their looking after them: but God's providence corrects the evil in a good degree, as to the children of those who must work for their bread, by bringing them early into circumstances, where their parents' indulgence cannot reach them; they get hard places, or are thrown among strangers, and

are weaned, in spite of themselves and their parents, more or less, from the habit of expecting to have all their own way. But if they are in easy circumstances, and no particular trouble or sorrow happens, to bring them to a better mind, the danger of such persons is great indeed: they get hardened in their pride and selfishness, and in the habit of expecting that all must make way for them; their very manner, as they go about the world, seems to say, "Stand off, for I am holier," or abler, or better, or more honourable "than thou." When by any chance they are made to hear a voice of warning and control from God, *that* makes them impatient enough; but if it be from man, they are quite ungovernable. Every little disappointment and mistake of others becomes a real trouble to such a person, because to him the mere circumstance of a thing not being as he wills it, is a vexation and affront. If things go at all wrong, he presently fancies every one against him, and sullenly tries to imagine, that he does well to be angry, even unto death.

This is what you train your children to, if you refuse to control them as God directs: this is the sort of turn you give to your own character, if you go on in a proud and wilful way, and refuse to be kept in order by the Bible and the Church.

It is to be feared, most of us are but too far gone already along this dangerous road, partly by the false indulgence of others, with whom we have been trusted, partly by our own wilfulness, since we judged for ourselves. But God's Holy Spirit, given us when we were made members of Christ, is not yet so entirely gone from us, nor so straitened within us, but

that, if we will, we may obtain His help, to undo even this mischief. He Himself gives us rules, even in this very Psalm; and when He gives rules, we may always understand Him (so great is His mercy) as promising strength to keep them.

What then are the Holy Spirit's rules, for making proud hard-hearted men to become again in some measure like weaned children? The first is, not to be "high-minded:" not to have a heart lifted up. That is, whenever a thought comes across our foolish heart, that we are better, or wiser, or worthier, or in any way more to be considered than another, presently to put down that thought; to put it down by main force, as a chaste person would a wanton thought; to say in your heart, 'This is the devil's doing, and I will not consent to it; get thee hence, Satan.'

Here you have the first rule, what course to take, if you want by God's help to be cured of pride and wilfulness: namely, repress each proud and wilful thought as it arises: this you can surely try to do as often as you think of it; you can call on God to help you; you can put it down by the spirit of prayer; you can remember Him Who came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. Do not tell me then, that 'you cannot change your heart, you cannot become other than high-minded:' this is not true; you may by degrees change your heart, else why does the Scripture say, "Purify your hearts?" If, not in your own power, but in the power of Christ abiding in you, you strive thus to watch your own thoughts, and to be really angry with yourself as often as you feel proud, by degrees you will not feel

proud; your heart will be so far changed, and the Good Spirit will see in you so much more of that great work of His, His work of sanctifying anew those who have fallen, His work of softening a hard and stubborn heart, and making it again, in some measure, like the heart of a weaned child.

And as you thus watch your thoughts, you will do well to watch your looks also: which is the second caution of the Church by the Psalmist: "I have no proud looks." It is remarkable how much stress the Bible lays upon the government of the looks, as quite necessary to the government of the thoughts. Thus the first murder might probably have never been committed, if Cain would have attended to the remonstrance of the All-seeing God, "Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?" and in another kind of sin, we know what caution our Lord gave, and how one unguarded look betrayed so great and good a man as king David. Now here we learn, that as it is in lust and in malice, so also in pride: there is a proud and haughty, a contemptuous and self-satisfied look, which itself arises from that kind of temper, and if indulged, tends in its turn to encourage the same temper; just as sullen looks feed sullenness, and wanton looks feed evil desires.

Here then is at once a plain rule from the heavenly Physician, for any one who wants to cure himself of pride and self-praise; "Let him have no proud looks." Let him watch his own eyes; and the next time he detects himself looking contemptuously at any of his brethren, or complacently on any work of his own, let him at once check and turn himself away, remembering how many worse things he knows of

himself, than he can possibly know of any one whom he is tempted to despise; and how very far his evil and corrupt thoughts and deeds overweigh this little good, whatever it be, for which he is inclined to value himself.

This was the way of holy David, the giver, by the Holy Spirit, of this good advice. He refrained and kept himself low; he avoided high looks, by ever acknowledging and remembering his faults, and keeping his sins always before him. Let us try to do the same: let us have the remembrance of our worst transgressions, those which we know to be most shameful, ever about us; let us wear it as a kind of sackcloth, and it will be as impossible for us to indulge in high disdainful looks towards our brethren, as it was for David to look proud and self-satisfied, when he was going bareheaded up to the Mount of Olives, being driven from Jerusalem, as he well knew, for the punishment of his secret sins.

Thirdly, the Holy Spirit teaches us here, that one great secret of true humility is not exercising ourselves in great matters which are too high for us: that is, I suppose, not looking anxiously into the secrets of God's providence, to know what He will do with us in this world; as they do who are over thoughtful, saying continually in their hearts, "What shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" All these things, all that belong to the morrow, belong to the Lord our God only; they are too high for us: we are not to exercise ourselves in them: but the time present, our own duty, the making the most of things as they are, for His glory and the salvation of our souls;

this, by His infinite mercy, belongs to us and our children, "that we may *do* the words of His law."

Again, there are certain great secrets of religion, wonders of Almighty God and of the world to come, which we are taught indistinctly in the Bible, and are given to understand, that the further knowledge of them is to be the reward of a holy and obedient life: such as the mystery of the Most Holy Trinity, Three Persons in one God: and the deep incomprehensible way of God's predestination, how He would have all men to be saved, and yet a few only out of many enter in at the narrow gate: these are great matters, and too high for any, except in such measure as their souls are purified by a holy and divine life. On these things, therefore, more especially, if we will be humble, that is, if we will be wise and safe, we shall reverently and thankfully accept the teaching of the Church, instead of endeavouring to make out things for ourselves: and it is the neglect of this rule which has made so many heretics and schismatics, and torn Christ's Body, contrary to His dying prayer, into so many sects and parties. People having just got a little way in goodness, just beginning to taste the sincere milk of the word, have thought themselves full-grown in Christ, spiritual, capable of judging all things: even as those others whom S. Paul to the Hebrews finds fault with, have grown slothful, and never weaned themselves from the milk, that is, have never got beyond the first beginnings of Christianity.

What then is to be done? Why, in this as in all other things, we must keep away from both sides of the danger; we must neither be slothful nor pre-

sumptuous: remembering our sins, and feeling unworthy to look into the great things of God, we must turn our thoughts rather to thorough exactness in our daily walk with Him; we must watch, deny, punish ourselves in all our foolish and corrupt ways, little and great; we must refrain our souls and keep them low, we must fall down and yield ourselves humbly up to God's gracious and blessed influences. And then, as growing healthy children come by degrees to understand this world which we see, and which was at first so great a mystery to them; so we, without knowing how, shall have our eyes gradually opened to the glories of that other, that unseen world, which is round us on every side, if we did but know it. Our humble obedience, not our self-willed speculations, will prepare us for the revelation of "the mystery of God and the Father, and of Christ; in Whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge."

To Whom, with the Blessed Spirit of God, even to the most Holy and Glorious Trinity, be all honour and glory, all praise and adoration, all love and obedience, now and for evermore. Amen.

SERMON XVII.

JEHOIAKIM A WARNING NOT TO HARDEN OUR HEARTS AGAINST REPROOF.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JEREMIAH XXXVI. 32.

"Then took Jeremiah another roll, and gave it to Baruch the scribe, the son of Neriah; who wrote therein from the mouth of Jeremiah all the words of the book which Jehoiakim king of Judah had burned in the fire: and there were added besides unto them many like words."

I SUPPOSE there are few chapters in the Bible, which make a deeper impression on those who hear or read them, than this thirty-sixth of Jeremiah, containing the account of the wicked king of Judah, how he burned the roll of Jeremiah's prophecy. It is one which is apt to make a deep impression on children, as they hear it year after year. Yet, in one way of looking at it, how plain and simple and ordinary a thing it is. The king is sitting quietly and comfortably by the fire in winter-time: one of his servants comes and tells him of certain words which were being read to the people: he sends for the writing, hears a little of it, and not liking it, and fancy-

ing it would make men uneasy, in a careless way cuts it to pieces, and throws it into the fire, and thinks no more about it. What is there particular in all this? It seems like what any one might do any day: but look at it with the eye of faith, and see what a grave and fearful lesson it reads, how full it is of the deepest and most necessary warning.

First, Almighty God commands the prophet to gather together in one writing all the words which he had spoken in God's Name at different times; "it may be," saith He, "that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin." God knew that they for the most part would not return: God knew that the warning would be too commonly quite vain and without fruit: yet He commands the people to be warned: He knows what the king will do, nevertheless He provides the copy of the roll, and commands that it may be put into those hands which He knows will deal most profanely with it. And so it is even now continually. He warns sinners, and provides them with the means of grace, and calls them ten thousand ways to amendment of life: while yet He sees plainly beforehand that they will scorn it all, or otherwise make a bad use of it. Why our Lord does so, we know not: but we are certain of the fact, and it is very aweful to think of. The servants who saw Jehoiakim burn the roll might very likely forget it all in a few hours. God was to them as one of the false gods of the heathen: and His prophetic word no more than fortune-telling. So they

went on with their usual business and diversions, as if nothing particular had happened: perhaps the whole thing faded away from their memories: serious as it was and shocking, and dangerous in the judgement of our Lord and His saints. What if it should be so with us, my brethren? What if even now there should be something written in God's book against us, which at some time His providence specially laid before us, but now it is quite entirely gone out of our minds? How shall we be able to bear it, when that book shall be opened? Oh let us be wise in time, and pray God to go on bringing our sins to remembrance, that we may repent of them in earnest before we die!

Next, see the charity of the prophet. He is shut up; he cannot go to the house of the Lord, to give the Lord's message himself: therefore he calls his friend and assistant Baruch, and instructs him what to do, how to read to them for their souls' good. So have the saints always done: so does the Church even now continually. She watches and waits for opportunities to do good to persons, as it were, against their will. The more they persecute, the more they are against her, the more she labours and studies to do them good. Thus did Jeremiah: writing for those to whom he could not speak, and sending when he could not go to them.

There is something also to be observed on the occasion of his sending Baruch. It was the fasting day: "they proclaimed a fast before the Lord to all the people in Jerusalem, and to all the people that came from the cities of Judah unto Jerusalem." That wicked king, who did evil in the sight of the

Lord, according to all that his fathers had done, even he with his counsellors thought right to proclaim now and then a solemn fast unto the Lord: and the people thought right to come and keep the fast, although they were living, very commonly, in profane idolatry and entire contempt of the Lord: serving Baal, worshipping the host of heaven, practising all the vile corruptions of the heathen. I say, notwithstanding all this, they could not be easy without coming regularly, and fasting and praying and humbly calling upon God. And so it is now. Many who do not even try to keep the commandments have so much religion in them as to come punctually more or less often to Church, and put themselves in the way of hearing what is good. And God causes them to hear in the Church the sad truth concerning their own souls: that they, continuing what they are, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. And even if the greater part continue unmoved, yet here and there one is touched: his heart is tenderer than the rest: he takes God at His word, he confesses his sins and repents of them and shall escape when the day of wrath shall come on. There we see the providential mercy of God in ordering things so that even the wicked shall for a long while keep up the outward face and form of religion, and thereby their less hardened brethren have a better chance of being recovered.

Something like this seems to have taken place even at this very time. When Baruch read the dreadful roll in the ears of all the people, some of the princes heard of it, and sent for him, and caused him to read it again to them especially: as if any

one, having heard a sermon in Church, and being moved by it, should ask to read or hear it over again privately. All this seems well done: it was a sign that they had some thought left, that they were not utterly hardened: and accordingly, when they had heard it "they were afraid both one and other," they did not scorn it, as utter blasphemers would have done, but they said, "we will surely tell the king of all these words." They come accordingly to the king, and find him, as I said, sitting quietly at his ease: in the winter house, in the ninth month, i.e. according to their reckoning, in November or December, with a fire on the hearth burning before him. What a picture it is of worldly ease and comfort. We read elsewhere that this same king Jehoiakim was a great builder, and delighted in making his houses as rich and as costly as he could, and so got himself into debt: building "[b]his house by unrighteousness and his chambers by wrong; using his neighbour's service without wages and giving him not for his work:" and it seems suitable enough to such a character, that he should be displeased, and hard, and scornful, when God's warning message was brought to him as he was enjoying himself in his own apartment. He could not bear to have his comforts disturbed with alarms about the Chaldeans taking the city, and with hearing of God's anger against his sins. It is the very picture of a careless selfish man, hardening himself against all that he hears in sermons or reads in good books, or meets with in the way of Providence, to make him anxious about his own soul. And see what it came to in

[b] Jer. xxii. 13.

Jehoiakim's case. When the princes had brought the roll, and three or four leaves had been read to the king, "he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the roll was consumed in the fire that was on the hearth." He went on cutting leaf after leaf: no misgiving, no better thought came over him: he was obstinately and doggedly set against God's message, and would not rest until he had burned the whole of it. As if a man angry at being reproved out of the Bible for his sins, should just take the book, and tear it in pieces, or throw it leaf by leaf into the fire: in a passion perhaps when he first began, but as he went on, shewing deliberate scorn and profaneness. One has read of such things before now, of wicked persons actually burning their Bibles or trampling them under foot because they told unpleasant truths: and one has not seldom seen something like it (not half so bad, I trust, but still in a very real way something like it) when persons being seriously spoken to, have rejected (perhaps) the very words of the Bible, have mocked and made sport of them, or have treated them scornfully, or cast them by in defiance: like Pharaoh, when he so scornfully replied to Moses, using the very words of the prophet's message: "[c] Who is the Lord, that I should obey His voice to let Israel go? I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go."

Neither could the sinner in this case say, 'I was left entirely to myself: I had no man to remonstrate with me, and shew me the error of my ways.' For the nobles who mentioned the roll to the king made

[c] Ex. v. 2.

intercession with him that he would not burn it: but he refused to hear them. It sometimes happens, that those who will not listen to God's own words, or to the voice of His messengers directly speaking to them, are yet moved a little by the distress or the entreaties of some friend. The unbelieving husband is influenced by the wife, or the unbelieving wife is influenced by the husband: or a man's trusted servants draw near to him as to Naaman, and persuade him to care a little for his own soul. Not so Jehoiakim: he would not be touched by the entreaties of his faithful servants so much as to spare any portion of the Divine Roll; he sat coolly and scornfully looking on, until all was consumed.

It would seem, indeed, as if they who did relent, went a very little way in their relenting. For we read, "Yet they were not afraid, nor rent their garments, neither the king, nor any of his servants that heard all these words." They were a little afraid at first, so far as to beseech the king that the Roll might not be burned. But they were not so much afraid as to rend their clothes, and live on in sorrow and perplexity of heart, seeking how they might repent and confess and amend. This want of fear and compunction is set down by the Holy Spirit as a very serious matter; as a thing to be surprised at. It is as if He had said, 'Wonderful to relate, they shewed no signs of contrition. They heard of most fearful things, of drought, famine, pestilence, of young children dying in the streets: of their being as reprobate silver, rejected of the Lord, or as a vessel marred in the hands of the potter: and of many other miseries, tokens and shadows of the last

Great Day: they heard it all, and they turned a deaf ear to it: they would not fear it, nor care for it.' At this, the Holy inspiring Spirit seems in a manner to wonder: as our Lord Himself one day marvelled at the Nazarenes' unbelief. But surely, if Jehoiakim's not fearing was wonderful, it is still more shocking and alarming, when Christians refuse to fear. For what are the miseries wherewith Jehoiakim was threatened, to the torments of eternal fire? If thine eye cause thee to sin, says our Lord, "[d] pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire: where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched." What a sentence is that? and how often have many, perhaps all of us,.heard it or read it, and not been at all afraid. Alas! for the hardening disturbing force of this world, shutting and searing up men's hearts against the voice of the Son of God, speaking out so plainly to warn His poor creatures, now in gentleness and now in alarm. Alas, that the only feeling excited in men's hearts by Christian reproof should be so often a spirit of anger and contempt: even as we read of this impenitent young king, that he sought to take Jeremiah and Baruch: only the Lord, on Whose errand they had come, hid them. He was like a person who should try to kill God's priests, after he had burned his Bible. And so we not uncommonly find that when people have set themselves against the truth, and have in a way made up their minds that they will not take warnings but will manage entirely for themselves; as they

[d] S. Mark ix. 47, 48.

do not exactly burn their Bibles, yet they put them by, and treat them with scorn and neglect, so they shew plainly enough that if they could, they would be glad to silence and persecute the ministers and messengers of Christ. They dislike the priesthood and love to be rude to priests.

But now attend to what God teaches in the end of this chapter. All the doings of this unhappy prince against his God were in vain. The prophets he could not take, for the Lord hid them: the Roll of prophecy he had indeed burned, and no doubt he took a savage and profane pleasure as he watched it consuming to ashes, and thought to himself, 'now I have got rid of one troublesome warning at least: this roll at least will never be brought in again, to disturb me when I am at ease in my palace.' But no: it might not be; [e] there are many devices in man's foolish heart, but the counsel of the just Lord, Who hateth sin, that and that only shall stand. The roll was burned, but no jot or tittle of it was lost. In a very short time, by the special command of God, Jeremiah had taken another roll, and had written in it all the words of the first roll, and not only so, but had added besides unto them many like words: and among the words which were added was that fearful one concerning king Jehoiakim himself, that his posterity should very soon fail, and that his dead body should be cast out and never even come to the grave: to be a memorial for ever of God's just judgement and revenge upon those who slight and despise His warnings, and insult His means of grace. It was one instance more of this everlasting law of God's

[e] Prov. xix. 21.

kingdom, "[f] them that honour Me I will honour, and they that despise Me shall be lightly esteemed." The punishment was in an especial way suited to the offence: as even we may understand. For as Jehoiakim by that act of cutting the roll in pieces and throwing it into the fire shewed a scorn and hatred greater than words could express of the great God and His terrible warnings: so nothing in the world could more awefully set forth the condition of one made an outcast for ever, than his dead body being so cast out after sentence beforehand given. He had been as scornful as he could towards God, and now, (as the Psalm says) "[g] He that dwelleth in heaven" would openly "laugh" *him* "to scorn." The condition of his corpse was to be a visible token of what their souls and bodies will come to, whom God in the last day shall cast out of the heavenly Jerusalem. And his sad history stands in God's book, and is read continually in the Church, as a notice of what God will do with those who despise and trample on His merciful warnings.

And now, Christian brethren and sisters, what says conscience to all this? Do not say, It is nothing to us; we never burned our Bibles. But consider: has none of us been apt to harden his heart against our Lord's reproofs? Has not this very lesson about Jehoiakim, and others like it, come to us year after year, and something within has told us, 'You are the men:' and we have made light of the good and godly motions, and have been angry with the kind friends, and have shut up the good books, that put us in mind of our faults; and

[f] 1 Sam. ii. 30. [g] Ps. ii. 4.

have turned our backs upon our God, as though by not looking towards Him we could hinder Him from seeing us. Alas, while we so trifle with the gracious warnings of our Judge, what are we but walking in our sleep on the very edge of the pit of hell? O let us do so no longer: let us at least not be rude nor be peevish towards those who charitably try to awaken us: let us be sure that for every attempt on our part to put away His warnings from us, He will but make our sentence heavier. We may burn the roll now, or hide our eyes from it: but it will be read in our hearing bye and bye, with all the words in it which we most shrink from now; and if we go on in our profane ways, there will be added unto them many like words. But if we timely repent in earnest, none of them shall be mentioned unto us. There is yet time to do so, but it will very soon be over.

SERMON XVIII.

THE SWORD OF THE SPIRIT.

EIGHTEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. MATTHEW xxii. 46.

"No man was able to answer Him a word: neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions."

THE Church on earth will always be militant: always a soldier, always on duty. Her Captain was so, the Captain of her salvation, Christ Jesus. Not one moment had He of rest and quiet from the time that being newly baptized, He went forth into the wilderness to be tempted first, then to preach, saying "The kingdom of God is at hand; repent ye and believe the Gospel." So saying, our blessed Lord was openly declaring war against Satan and his adherents: and Satan well knowing this, would not allow his subjects to leave our Lord alone. Without were persecutions, within agonies, from that moment till He bowed His Head, and said, "It is finished," and His Soul departed from His Body. It was combat and warfare, it was cumbrance, burden, and strife, all along from the beginning to the end, from the river of Jordan to Gethsemane and Calvary.

And as the Head was, so must the members be. The people of Christ, from Baptism to death, must be in strife as Christ Himself was. We must be ever in warfare against the bad words, examples, and suggestions, of the wicked world, our fellow-sinners all around us. To both we are to oppose "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." The plain declarations of His Will, once for all made known to us, are to be as a sharp sword, ready in our hands, to be drawn in a moment, and used earnestly against any evil saying or imagination which come in our way to do us harm. The air of this world is full, so to speak, of such dangerous words and thoughts: as full as ever the air of Egypt was of lice and flies and all sorts of loathsome insects to torment and defile the enemies of God. We cannot entirely avoid them but we must pray against them, and when they come we must fight against them. We must fight as our great Captain did, I mean Jesus Christ, the Son of God: we must by a right and earnest use of what the Church has taught us out of the Bible parry and turn aside the wounds which the enemy aims at us. So our Lord fought in the wilderness against the evil One, at the outset of His Ministry. Three times the devil assaulted Him, and three times our lowly and Almighty Saviour met him with the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God. At first, the temptation, suggested by our Lord's long fasting, was to command the stones to be made bread. What was the answer? "[a] It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." That was the devil's first wound.

[a] S. Matt. iv. 4, 7, 10.

The second was when he would have our Lord throw Himself down, and again it was said to him, "*It is written*, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord," nor presume on His goodness. That was the second wound. The third, which drove him away for a long season, was also a saying out of the Bible. He proposed to the Lord to worship him and so become king of the whole earth: but what said Jesus? again, "It is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve[a]. Three temptations, and three verses of Scripture to meet them. Had our Lord Jesus Christ then need of the Bible, He Who is the Lord and Author of the Bible? nay, but it was His gracious Will herein, as in so many other things, to set us His children an example, doing as our Surety and representative those exercises which He knew would be needful for us. As He was baptized and prayed, though He needed not Baptism nor prayer, in order to shew us how we should approach to God: so He made His answers to the devil first, and afterwards to the Pharisees, out of the writings of His servants Moses and the prophets, that we might know how to order ourselves when the like sore trials come upon us; not to depend at all upon ourselves, but to use in faith the weapon wherewith God has armed us, Holy Scripture, the word which we have heard from the beginning. This, I say, was our Lord's custom not only in resisting Satan, as in the wilderness, but also in resisting Satan's servants, the Scribes and Pharisees, when they from time to time attacked Him. Their evil words He baffled, as He had Satan's suggestions of evil thought, by His own Almighty and perfect word, like a sharp two-

edged sword coming out of His Mouth—so S. John saw Him more than once coming in vision to war against His enemies and ours. It was always His own Word whereby He put them down; but there was this difference, that to some He replied in *new* words immediately His own; oracles of the Most High, which had never been uttered before: to others He alleged words of the Old Testament which of course were equally His own, but which He had spoken before by some one or other of His messengers. When (e.g.) they charged Him with sabbath-breaking, He argued with them as another person might, "[b] Which of you shall have an ass or an ox fallen into a pit, and will not straightway pull him out on the sabbath day?" and at the same time He enforced His argument by doing that which none other could have done, healing the sick with a word or a touch. His doings were so plainly the doings of God, that they could not but believe His sayings to be the words of God. Another time He refuted them out of the Scriptures, as when speaking of divorce He reminded them of God's first institution of marriage; "They twain shall be one flesh." This, they owned to be God's Word: He had no need to confirm it by miracle.

The last week in our Lord's earthly life, as it was one in which His enemies were particularly busy, seeking to catch something out of His Mouth that they might accuse Him: so it is full of His marvellous wisdom, in both kinds of answers. It was His own new and Divine Word, when to those who asked what authority He had, He put the question about

[b] S. Luke xiv. 5.

the baptism of John, Whence was it? of heaven or of men? and they could not answer Him: and again when He silenced the Pharisees about the tribute money. But He mostly appears to have reasoned with them out of the Old Testament. He answered the Sadducees who denied that there is any future life, by shewing that God spoke to Moses in the Bush of certain dead persons, Abraham Isaac and Jacob, as being yet alive. And in the Gospel for this week which contains the last two instances of His condescending so to question with His persecutors in the temple, He employs Scripture, and they are finally put to silence. They ask Him, "Which is the great commandment in the law?" and He tells them out of Deuteronomy, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might," and out of Leviticus, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Again, He asks them, Whose Son is Christ? and forces them to admit His answer, The Son of God, by urging on them what David says in the Psalms, "[c]The Lord said unto my Lord, sit Thou on My right Hand." And that is the last instance of His reasoning with His enemies: as the discourse with Satan in the wilderness is the first. In both, His weapon is Holy Scripture.

We cannot perform miracles, to confirm what God hath taught us or may teach us of His truth: but we have the Holy Scripture, which needs no miracle: and by the help of devout prayer in the communion of the Holy Church, we may hope for the gift of the Holy Spirit, to help us in rightly using the Scripture.

[c] Ps. cx. 1.

This is our sword of the Spirit, which we are commanded to take, with the rest of the armour of God, in our contention against the Evil spirits, the rulers of the darkness of this world: as well as against flesh and blood, the wicked world all around us—our no less real, though not so powerful enemies. Against these enemies of God and our souls we are to fight with God's holy Word, the teaching of His Word by His Church, is to be with us as a sharp sword coming out of our mouths as it came out of the Mouth of our Leader and Saviour when He was beset with the same enemies. For so the prophetic sayings represent the soldiers and followers of Jesus Christ (of which number we every one of us profess ourselves to be). "The armies in heaven" it saith, "[d] followed Him clothed in fine linen, white and clean" (which is the righteousness of saints); "and out of His mouth goeth a sharp sword." As we, by His grace, are His armies following Him, so to us also in our measure is given the use of that sharp sword, His Word, to protect our own faith and virtue, and to put His enemies, bad thoughts and bad men, to silence.

See then, Christian brethren; see fathers and mothers and instructors; see Christian youths and maidens, what it is we are really about, when we are taking serious pains to know our Bibles better and better, whether at home, in Church or in school. We are arming ourselves, with real armour, for a real and very dangerous conflict. Bad thoughts and bad words, evil men and devils, are at hand, and we must meet them: and the commandments and other sayings of our Lord Jesus Christ are the weapons ap-

[d] Rev. xix. 14, 15.

pointed us to meet them with. Do you not see then, that parents who take no care to have their children taught the Bible and the right use of it, are as if they sent them into battle unarmed: as if they should stand by and say, There is my child just starting to fight the enemy, but it is too much trouble for me to take care that he has his weapon? You would think that cruel and unnatural: but how is it not much more cruel to allow a son or daughter to grow up and go forth into this evil world, so crowded on every side with deadly enemies, and not to provide them with the knowledge of God and Christ, with the holy words of God, to resist those enemies? Again, people who have been taught the Bible, and neglect to use it against the enemies of their souls, are as if one should take great pains to arm a soldier completely for battle, and he, entering on the field, should just throw away his armour, saying it was cumbrous, or heating, or strange-looking. Who would encourage or praise such an one? who would pity him when wounded or slain? It is too plain: he would be without excuse. How then can a Christian be excused who has a Bible and makes no use of it for the correction of his daily life and driving away the enemies of his soul?

Now do not say, I am poor, inexperienced, ignorant: a scholar may use his Bible, but how should I? You know the Creed, at least, and the ten Commandments. Out of the Creed you may answer if you will all the enemies of your faith: out of the Commandments you may answer all temptations to known sin. Only ask God with hearty prayer in

the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and be sure He will grant you this grace.

For instance: he who knows least, commonly knows this much: that the great Commandment, the main point, is to love God with all one's heart, mind, soul, strength: and one's neighbour as one's self. This is so plain, that the enemies of our Lord, (as you heard just now in the Gospel,) accepted it at once as a true account of the principal meaning of the Law: and the common people, more especially, heard it gladly. My brethren His will is that you also and I, and the common people of our time, should hear and understand and practise this commandment of love. It is as needful for us surely as for the men who then heard Him speak. And the practice of it is very simple. Only ask your Lord, seriously and regularly pray to Him in the morning for grace to love Him and one another, and during the day watch and consider in every point of behaviour, How will this suit with the love I owe to my God? how with that which is due to my neighbour? and at night recollect yourself for a minute or two whether all your things have been done with charity. Thus you, like your Lord and Master, poor, simple, ignorant as you may be, will be able to put the enemies of your soul to silence, and really to serve and please Him in newness of life.

As to the Creed again: our condescending Lord shews us in to-day's Gospel very plainly, how to resist and overcome the enemies of our faith. He turns our mind towards His Incarnation: that is the great truth that He would especially have us remember. He asks you one and all, as He asked the

Pharisees, "What think ye of Christ? Whose son is He?" and He would have you answer Him with heart and lips out of the holy Creed which you have been taught, 'The only begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, being of one substance with the Father.' That is the key to all Christian truth, as love is to all Christian practice: as the blessed Apostle says, To "believe on the Name of His Son Jesus Christ and to love one another, as He gave us commandment." In that, and in the rest of the holy faith which you have been taught, you must practise a holy and devout obstinacy: not permitting yourself to be moved by the craft and assaults of the devil or man; by light and profane conversation which you may hear; or by wicked envious unbelieving books, which may unhappily fall in your way. Avoid them if you can, as you would poison: if at any time you are brought to the knowledge of them, by accident, or for the good of others who need warning, arm yourself against them with deep mistrust of yourself and entire faith in Him Who has taught you. Remember the sign of the Cross in your forehead, and in the power of that Cross lay hold of one or another of the good words of God which you have learned, and use it for a sword against the enemy. He wants you to break some commandment; to steal, to lie, to commit uncleanness or the like: do you think steadily of the commandment; think of it with a strong thought, and say to him, 'It is written, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Lie not one to another,' or whatever the word may be which the occasion requires. Or again, he or his wicked agents, the un-

believing books and writings which abound, will say to you, 'Why so particular about Sunday?' and you will say, 'It is written, Remember to keep it holy:' or he will say, 'Why do you go to Church, why not as well serve God any where else?' and you will say, 'I believe in the *Communion* of saints:' or he will say, 'Why think so much about Baptism?' and you will say, 'I acknowledge one Baptism for the remission of sins.' Thus like humble and youthful David, you will overthrow the Goliath of this time, the giant unbelief, with a sling and a stone. The enemy thus resisted will most likely flee from you, and you will be left to serve God in peace: as you just now heard concerning your Master, "no man was able to answer Him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask Him any more questions." Or if you are still tried and still persevere, the brighter will be your crown in the last day, not yours, but Christ's in you.

SERMON XIX.

CONTRITION AND AMENDMENT.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

EZEKIEL xviii. 31.

"Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

THE prophet Ezekiel writes almost in a severer tone than any other of the prophets. The roll of the book which was sent him was written full of lamentations and mourning and woe. He tells Jerusalem that God will do in her that which He had not done, and whereunto He will not do any more the like, because of all her abominations: that the fathers shall eat the sons in the midst of her, and the sons the fathers: that His eye would not spare, neither would He have pity; and though they cried in His ears with a loud voice, He would not hear them; and lastly, to mention no more, he warns them that the presence of such as Noah, Daniel, and Job, would be of no use to keep off His sore judgements. He makes Jerusalem like the vine, which once withered, is absolutely good only for the fire.

And these are but a very few of the fearful threat-

enings which the book contains: such, that if you read them alone, and did not attend to the comforting parts also, you would think that surely there was no chance at all for the people to whom the prophet was writing: that they were quite, and finally, given over to a reprobate mind.

Yet, on the other hand, there is no one prophet who gives a more full and free invitation to true penitents to come near and receive God's mercy. Hear His gracious words, over and over repeated, in the lesson which you will hear this evening: "If the wicked will turn from all his sins which he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, they shall not be mentioned unto him; in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live. Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die, saith the Lord God, and not that he should return from his ways, and live?" And presently after, in words well known to all of us, "When the wicked man turneth away from his wickedness that he hath committed, and doeth that which is lawful and right, he shall save his soul alive. Because he considereth, and turneth away from all his transgressions which he hath committed, he shall surely live, he shall not die." And in the words of the text, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your trangressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin. Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of him

that dieth, saith the Lord God: wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye."

There are many other verses in Ezekiel equally gracious and affecting: but it is enough for the present to have brought these forward. And you see quite plainly, by the two sorts of texts, set one against another, that Ezekiel's voice and message, if at one time sterner than those of other prophets, were at another time more gracious and winning: or rather, both these characters were united in him, in a manner which no words can explain.

And so you will find it, if you go over the whole Scripture. The bitter and the sweet, fear and love, promises and threatenings, go always together: and if you find any where that any prophet or Apostle has spoken more fearfully than usual, you are sure to find further on, that the same holy writer has had also to convey his peculiar message of condescending love. In this, as in every thing else, the prophets and Apostles were faint types, shadows, tokens, of Him Who is their Lord and ours; both in His own teaching and in the teaching of the Church, which is His continued Presence on earth. None so gracious as Jesus Christ our Saviour in His heavenly offers of pardon, and calls to holiness: none so stern and peremptory as He, our Judge, when He speaks of what is prepared for the impenitent. "Come unto Me, all ye that labour, and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Him that cometh unto Me, I will in no wise cast out. Let him that is athirst come; and whosoever will, let him take of the water of life freely. There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth.

Her sins which are many are forgiven, for she loved much." These are some of His merciful sayings; and as they are far beyond the promises of all others, so are His fearful sayings beyond their threatenings. For it is the same mild and merciful Jesus, Who tells us of the worm that never dies, and the fire that is not quenched: of the rich man lifting up his eyes in the invisible world, being in torments: of a condition far worse than to have a millstone tied about one's neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea: of being bound hand and foot, and cast into outer darkness, where is weeping and gnashing of teeth. Glories higher than heaven, miseries deeper than hell, are signified indeed every where in the New Testament, but by no one so distinctly foretold as by Him, the Creator and Dispenser of both.

Therefore, whoever would teach as the Scriptures do, and especially whoever would teach as Christ does, must be careful to shew men both sides of the aweful picture beyond the grave: he must tell of judgement as well as mercy; he must try always to temper fear with love. Even where he is most encouraging, he will so speak as to make men very serious: the thought will not quite leave them, What if I should at last throw myself away, after all that has been done for me?

Observe the tone even of such a consoling passage, as was read to you just now out of Ezekiel: "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die?" Do not the words plainly teach, that if sinners will not take our Saviour's most gracious offer, if they will not

cast away all their transgressions, and make them a new heart and a new spirit, they will most surely die; there is no remedy for it?

The Almighty speaks as if in this matter of our salvation He had in some wonderful manner parted with His own power, and put it into our hands. "I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, saith the Lord God; wherefore turn yourselves, and live ye." It is the voice of a tender Father, most unwilling to punish His children, yet declaring that He *must* punish them, if they continue in their disobedience.

And on the other hand, when the same gracious voice alters to a more severe and peremptory tone, still the very threatening is a pledge of His unfailing love to the penitent. "When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby." How fearful is the sentence! yet as often as we hear it, it is a stay and encouragement to those who are trying to practise righteousness, whether as penitents, or as persevering in their first vows: just as when a parent or master is strict in punishing an unruly child, it is a token to all those who are trying to be orderly, that they shall in nowise lose the reward of any thing they do for His sake.

Whether, therefore, we look at our Lord's threatenings or His promises, we find every where both hope and fear. On every side and in every tone we seem to hear a voice calling, "Repent, and turn yourselves from all your transgressions; so iniquity shall not be your ruin." And then, lest we in our sloth and corruption wilfully stop short of true re-

pentance, the aweful and merciful voice goes on and says, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die?" As much as to say, without true and full repentance you must die: you must be separated from Jesus Christ, which will be death to your souls.

And true and full repentance is a greater work than some of us may have imagined. It is two great works in one: the first is hating the evil, "casting away all our transgressions:" the other is, loving the good, "making us a new heart and a new spirit." Let us not mistake our own case with regard to either of these. It may be our ruin if we do.

Let us observe, first, that we are to cast away all our sins; not this or that sin only, but all. We are to cast them away from us; not merely to part with them, but earnestly to cast them away; to put them from us with the same kind of loathing, as when we turn away from something which disgusts our senses, or refuse to hear words of reproach spoken of some dear friend.

We know the mind of our Creator and Saviour towards the sins which we, alas! have too freely committed in His sight. We know His sentence, when hypocrites live like heathens. "These," He says, "are a smoke in My nose, a fire that burneth all the day." And again: "I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot; I would thou wert cold or hot: therefore, because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of My mouth."

When a man has this sort of feeling towards his

old sins, however pleasant they once were to him; when the thought of them is shocking and disgusting to him, because he feels in his heart how loathsome they are to Almighty God, and to all good spirits: when he would be glad, if he could, to spue them out of his mouth, then he truly hates his sins: he is, so far, like David, who felt his past wickednesses going over his head, and "like a sore burthen too heavy for him to bear:" and though it is not at all necessary that a person who has grievously sinned should always *feel* such bitter remorse as the Psalmist expresses in that verse, yet it is necessary that he should always hate his sin as David did: it should no longer be part of his mind and heart and character: it should be quite entirely cut off, and cast away from him.

Now think on the difference between this state of mind, and the condition of the same person, while habitually given to the same sin, so that he felt as if he could not live without it. We know that persons sometimes do so express themselves with regard to some one favourite vice: it is no such rare thing, for example, to hear a man say, that he cannot live without excess of strong drink: and those who have gone on despising Christ's law of purity, will sometimes say for themselves the miserable words, which corrupt and fallen Israel utters in the prophet, "There is no hope, none: for I have followed strangers, and after them must I go." Think how such must be changed, before they shall have learned to turn away, with a kind of sickening, even at the first intrusion of a shameful thought.

Or take a more common, and to many a less fright-

ful case. Think on the difference between one who lives on at ease from day to day, without much thought of what is to come of it, only making himself as comfortable as he can: and the same person, should God touch his heart, really and in earnest trying all day long to do every thing, little and great, in such manner as will please his heavenly Lord. How great, how astonishing the change! and yet this is what we must continually aim at, if we are truly to repent, and if our iniquity is not to be our ruin.

For mark how the text goes on. It is not said only, "Cast away all your transgressions," but also, "make you a new heart and a new spirit." The same work, which in the psalm the penitent David prays God to accomplish for him, God Himself, here in the prophet, calls upon the penitent to accomplish for himself. David prays, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me:" and God says by Ezekiel, "Make you a new heart and a new spirit." That is, the conversion and amendment of sinners is in some mysterious way both God's work and their work: they "work out their own salvation," because "it is God that worketh in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure." And being God's work, it is compared to creation: it is like making a world out of nothing, light out of darkness, order out of confusion. Our transgressions are to be put away, and all kinds of virtues builded up in their place.

The mere hating our former sins is not sufficient, for that may be, as in the case of Judas, in mere despondency, for no good end: in fact, it is what the

impenitent transgressor must come to in the next world. Judas hated his sin, and the wages of it, when "he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple;" but instead of seeking Christ to be forgiven, "he departed, and went and hanged himself." He seemed in a sense to cast away his transgression, but he made no effort to form in himself a new heart and a new spirit.

But those whom Christ is guiding to true repentance, are learning to love Him as well as hate their sins. They are learning to delight in His presence, to rejoice in the feeling that He ever beholds them, to take pleasure in denying themselves, and putting themselves to inconvenience for Him, as a mother takes pleasure in what she does and endures for her child.

To love Christ is to love holiness, purity, meekness, humility, charity; to hunger and thirst after more of His likeness, in these and in all other respects. Now this is a very great change from the ordinary sinful ways of the world. It is not a matter of course; it will not come of itself.

Some sorts of transgression, it may be, do naturally leave men as they grow older; the desire of them naturally passes away: but the love of Christ, and the desire of Christian holiness, does not naturally and of course come in its place.

What must we do, that we may work this great work of God? Our Lord Himself answers: "Believe in Him Whom He hath sent." Turn your souls and bodies away from your sins, and your sinful pleasures, towards Jesus Christ crucified for you, with a sincere desire to love and please Him;

and He will presently begin to grant you such desire. The very first endeavour that you sincerely make, for the fear and love of Him, to amend your ways, He will look graciously upon you from heaven; He will come nearer to you, and be even more ready with His gracious help, the next time you are tried; and if you again stand firm, still again will His grace be vouchsafed, more readily and more abundantly; and so on as often as you do any thing, overcome yourself in any way, for His sake: until at last the new heart and new spirit, which He gave you first in Baptism, is thoroughly awakened and enlivened within you; and your thoughts and imaginations as regularly rise towards God, as before now they have sunk downwards to earthly and carnal things.

And in this good course you will naturally turn, all along, towards Christ's Church, which is His continued Presence on earth for our salvation: you will turn to Him, invisible, in His Church, to her ordinances and Sacraments, for help and guidance, as you would have turned to Him, had He been yet visible on earth. Do this steadily, and you have His own word for it, no past sins, no power of bad spirits, shall separate finally between Him and you. Come to Him thus, and you shall prove in your own person the mercy which He offers to all: "He will in no wise cast you out."

SERMON XX.

SELF-ABHORRENCE, A DUTY, A NECESSITY, AND A JOY.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

EZEKIEL XX. 43.

"Ye shall lothe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed."

IT is very remarkable, and yet most true, as all know who really know anything of Scripture, that the keenest and most searching places are also the most consoling. The Almighty wounds that He may heal, He humbles us before Him that He may lift us up, He says "[a] Woe unto thee Chorazin! Woe unto thee Bethsaida!"—declares the fearful judgement against those who knew Him and repented not, how that they are worse than Sodom, and having been exalted to Heaven shall be brought down to Hell, in order that He may presently add, "[b] Come unto Me, *all* ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For My yoke is easy and My

[a] S. Matt. xi. 21. [b] Ib. 28—30.

burden is light." *All*, without exception; not Sodom only, but Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum, all, even wicked Christians, if they will but come to Him weary and heavy laden, hating their sin and desiring to take His yoke upon them, *all* are invited to forgiveness, refreshment and rest.

It is then a sort of rule with Holy Scripture that along with the sharpest threatenings to the impenitent we may expect to find the most soothing invitations to the penitent. And so in the writings of the aweful prophet Ezekiel which the Church appoints to be read at this season, we find the saddest picture of the sins of God's elect people, along with the most merciful and sweet encouragement to those who will turn from their sins. Under the figure of God's ancient people, the Israelites, the Holy Spirit here sets before us a true account of our own condition, our own doings, our own danger, our own chance of deliverance. First, when we read or hear of His choosing Israel, when they were yet in the land of Egypt, giving them His gracious promises, and fulfilling those promises by bringing them out of the land, how can we help seeing that all is spoken of us Christians, His looking on us and choosing us out of the world, when we were born in sin and children of wrath; His bringing us by Baptism into a state of grace? Again when we read of the Israelites rebelling against God, walking not in His statutes, despising His judgements, greatly polluting His sabbaths; nay, going after their idols, and *that* again and again, one generation after another, the fathers first and the children after them: seeking out all places where they might pollute themselves with idolatry, nay, longing

to be heathens again that they might worship idols and commit whoredom, as they fancied, with more impunity. When we are told of these things, we must needs remember our own extreme unworthiness, how sadly we have trifled, too many of us, with the grace of God bestowed on us before we know anything: how we have listened to the world, the flesh, and the devil, doing what we promised to renounce and renouncing what we promised to do: how we have polluted ourselves in our own gifts, our very sacrifices and Sacraments and prayers, by our evil and slothful ways too often turning them into sin: so that one history for the great part of our lives, Christians as we are, and endowed with so high privileges, if truly told, would seem but a course of grievous sin, oft and many times committed, long and many years continued. Alas, it is too true. What the Psalmist says of the Israelites is but too exact an account of the behaviour of very many of us, all our lives long unto this very day. We have been "[c] as our forefathers, a faithless and stubborn generation: a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit" would not cleave "stedfastly unto God." We have not kept the covenant of our God, the vow and promise made in our Baptism: we would not walk in His law: too much have we forgotten "what He hath done and the wonderful works which He shewed" for us. Alas, that so it should be, and alas, that we should own it with hearts so hard and unmoved as we are too apt to do: so entirely taking our backsliding as a matter of course, when it might rather be expected that our head should be waters

[c] Ps. lxxviii. 9, 12.

and our eyes a fountain of tears: that we should abhor ourselves, and repent in dust and ashes, remembering how good God has been to us and what an unworthy return we have made. Yet it is better to own the truth and be convinced of it, how little soever our hard hearts are able to feel it. If we do not as yet loathe ourselves, if we do not grieve as we ought, at least we may pray and desire to do so: we may pray with the Church, that He Who alone can, would 'create and make in us new and contrite hearts: that we worthily lamenting our sins, and acknowledging our wretchedness, may obtain of Him, the God of all mercy, perfect remission and forgiveness.'

And, to this end, it will by God's mercy be a great help to us, if we dwell as earnestly as we can on the later portion of the prophet's divine warning: the verses in which by his mouth Almighty God tells first the Jews and then us, how that after all He is willing, nay earnestly longs, to receive us into mercy; to have us come to Him confessing and bewailing our sins, that He Whose mercy is over all His works, may in the end shew mercy to such as we are. Hear His own words: they are very music to those who have begun to loathe themselves in earnest; "I will bring you, says the Lord, even you My backsliding children; I will bring you out from the people, and will gather you out of the countries wherein ye are scattered." Even so God's good providence brings the lost and wandering sinner from the evil places and bad company in which he was losing his soul. And then as to the Jews it is said, "I will bring you into the wilderness of the people and there will

I plead with you face to face," so Almighty God causes the repenting soul to feel its own desolate condition without Him, and to draw nearer to Him, feel His Presence more entirely, than ever it did before. And so the tale of His mercies goes on, till it comes to entire pardon and restoration: "I will accept you with your sweet savour," i. e. with your earnest prayers which you offer Me in the name of Jesus Christ: "when I bring you out from the people, and gather you out of the countries wherein ye have been scattered," i. e. when I bring you out of your evil courses and bad company. "And ye shall know that I am the Lord:" ye shall have a deep and true sense of Mine aweful Presence, and of the great things which you have hitherto talked of without thinking: "when I shall bring you into the land of Israel"—into the privileges and comforts of My Church, from which you have sadly wandered. "And then shall ye remember your ways, and all your doings, wherein ye have been defiled; and ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed. And ye shall know that I am the Lord, when I have wrought with you for My Name's sake, not according to your wicked ways, nor according to your corrupt doings, O ye house of Israel, saith the Lord God."

It seems to me, that the very sound of these words must needs be a joy and consolation more than can be expressed, to all those—alas, how many!—in the Christian Church who are conscious of their own fallings away since they received the grace of God in Baptism, and earnestly desire to repent of them. For here the God of pardon and peace offers those

blessed gifts to all such, and gives them signs, by which they may judge whether they themselves are in a way to profit by His gracious offer. If you feel that you are in this earth as in a wilderness, lonely and desolate, with none but Him really to help you: if you are aware of God being near you, pleading with you face to face, making you feel in some sort what eternity is, how you have been trifling with it, what a price He has paid that it may be a happy eternity to you: more especially, if you remember with loathing your past sins, so as even to loathe yourselves for them: then you are in a good way; then there is a reasonable hope of your proving a true penitent, and being accepted of God, at last: then He will deal with you for His Name's sake, i. e. mercifully, (for sweet is His mercy) and not according to your ways, which have been wicked, and your doings, which have been corrupt. That is, He will pardon and not reject you.

Now among the tokens of consolation in this soothing passage, that which is most distinctly dwelt upon and most earnestly put forward, we see at once, is the loathing ourselves. We had need look well to this, all of us who have ever needed consolation and recovery from grievous sin. "Ye shall loathe yourselves in your own sight for all your evils that ye have committed." Your sins will dwell so upon your mind and memory, that instead of becoming used to them, and thinking little of them, you will hate them more and more, and yourselves for having committed them: you will wonder and vex yourself to have been so utterly wrong and foolish. You will be really and truly grieved and angry with yourself,

that you should have been the person to have done such and such things. This feeling is of course known, more or less, to all who are in any degree truly penitent. They cannot but practise, in some degree, what the Church calls the virtue of repentance. They feel and know that in order to be pardoned they must in *some* sense and in *some* measure bewail, and confess, and forsake their sins. But in this they are apt to fall short; all of us are apt to do so; that we do not always remember that this contrition, this bewailing our sinfulness, is by no means intended by the Almighty to pass away; rather He means it to continue all our life long. One is sometimes able to perceive, how persons who have lived, it may be many years, in deadly sin, come to perceive by God's mercy somewhat of their own fearful condition, and so being in care for their soul, they break off the bad habit, which perhaps by that time has become less tempting to them, and go on decently, and in a manner religiously, and yet they fall short of contrition, they do not think it necessary to go on vexing and hating those sins in themselves: once left off, they consider that they have nothing to do with them. Now a soul which truly how faintly soever, loves God, will never be content with such a passing sorrow as this. The more he is weaned from the evil habit which once had dominion over him, the more earnestly and sincerely will he pray to God for grace to love Him; the more freely will such grace be granted to his earnest prayers; and of course, the more he comes to love God, the more self-reproach and trouble will he feel, that he should ever have been the person to use his Beloved

so ill. Those who have little or none of this feeling, have reason to fear that they do not truly love God; that their penitence, so far as it yet goes on, is rather too much mixed up with earthly motives, such as the desire of being respectable and comfortable. They have need to be more diligent than ever in examining themselves, and going over their past transgressions, for this very purpose, that it may humble them and make them contrite. For their sins surely are as loathsome as ever, and they are still and always must be the very same persons who committed those sins, whether half an hour, or ten years, has passed since the commission of them. They naturally *feel* less, they cannot help that, but by God's grace they may, if they will, have as deep and true a sense of their sins as ever: rather it would be true to say that the longer they have lived in true penitence, the more they know of Christ by happy experience, so much the *more* deeply will they in their hearts be convinced and mindful how great their guilt has been, and what a bad mark it may yet have left upon them. If they do not bewail themselves so passionately, they will loathe themselves at least as earnestly.

And this self humiliation, as it may not at any time cease, so neither will any part of our wrong behaviour be forgotten in it. We must practise it *all our lives long*, and *for all our sins*. This also is sometimes overlooked, especially by persons who are burdened over much with some one grievous transgression or evil habit. Once delivered, by God's mercy, from that, or earnestly desiring and labouring to be delivered from it, they are apt to pass over

other parts of their conduct, in which nevertheless there may be very much to repent of. How often, when persons have mourned, confessed, forsaken, bad habits of extravagance or of uncleanness, has their penitence continued very imperfect through neglect of that watchfulness and prayer which the government of their temper requireth of them: and so they have gone on sinning in anger and impatience, when they had left off sinning in sensual unworthy desires! How commonly do persons who have overcome temptations to dishonesty and irregularity of life fall into the sin of judging and speaking evil of others! Take care of this: see to it that in your penitence and confessions you try to loathe yourselves in your own sight not for some only but for all the evils you have committed.

Take care again that this your displeased feeling against yourselves, which you cannot but experience when you use real self examination, go not away from you when your self examination is ended and the business of life begins again. Take it along with you when you rise up from your knees, carry it with you in your work and in your diversions; especially do not forget it in conversation with others. Say very often to yourself, what right have I to complain or find fault, to fret myself against God or man: I who have been so wicked, so careless, so unmindful of my duty and my danger, so very nearly lost for ever, by my own most grievous fault? And observe: if this be really our mind, we shall be constantly afraid of indulging ourselves, we shall very thankfully follow after the voice of our Lord and His Church, when they call on us to practise self denial.

A forgiven sinner; one who has destroyed himself and exists only by the mere mercy of Him Whom he has grievously wronged; how can he find it in his heart to thrust himself in, and take the chief room? If we would but consider, surely very shame would cause us of our own accord to take the lowest room, the less favoured place, the less desirable portion in all things, and not to be affronted, but to take it as a matter of course when others appoint it for us, or leave us to it.

Many might think this a poor dreary miserable life: to be always inwardly vexed and displeased with one's self, always drawing back, more or less, from innocent indulgences which we should naturally desire. Think of it only so, and it may seem intolerable: but try it in earnest for your soul's good, with earnest prayer, and you will find it the true way of peace. He Who commands it, will not only enable you to bear it, but will make it sweet and delightful, according to His own promise, "[d] My yoke is easy and My burden is light." Are crosses and mortifications sent upon us? The remembrance of what we deserve will make them not only tolerable but welcome; we shall accept the punishment of our iniquity, hoping that it may come rather here than hereafter, rather in time than in eternity. Are we prosperous in this world, well thought of and seeming to have our own way? The habit of remembering our sins and loathing ourselves for them lessens the danger of those outward gifts by making us feel how little we deserve them: what men would think of us if they knew all. Thus every way, this habit

[d] S. Matt. xi. 30.

of settled self-dislike will take us away from false confidences, and keep us close to the Lord, our Strength and our Redeemer. As long as we are in this world, it is a gracious token from Him that He, our good Shepherd, hath not only found us, His lost sheep, but is bearing us on His shoulders, on the way to our true home. And what is yet more, this self-distrust and self-reproach will be the very mark of the righteous, it will distinguish the sheep from the goats, at the last day. They will say, "[e] Lord, when saw we Thee an hungered and fed Thee?" When did we really do any good work for Thy sake? And they will wonder to hear how graciously He accounted of their poor weak humble endeavours. May your portion and mine be with them! And to secure it may we never leave off vexing and punishing ourselves for our own faults, while we live here!

[e] S. Matt. xxv. 37.

SERMON XXI.

THE POWER OF THE LORD STILL PRESENT TO HEAL.

NINETEENTH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. MATT. ix. 2.

"*And Jesus seeing their faith, said unto the sick of the palsy, Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.*"

VERY wonderful is the picture drawn for us in the Gospel for to day, by the finger of the Holy Ghost. Our Lord teaching: the Scribes and Pharisees round Him, and a very great multitude, even as far off as from Jerusalem. For now the Divine Master's teaching was beginning to draw very general attention, and people came from a distance to see and hear Him, especially those who thought themselves judges. He was among them as by His holy Church He is now in the world: all are somehow or other aware of His Presence: few turn themselves towards it in the saving and blessed way which He intended. Some pass away, some look on in ignorant wonder, some, alas, notice Him present in His Church only to find fault, and utter words of scorn, and do what

they can to disturb and unsettle others. Yet not a few, we trust, come in true and constant faith, in humble penitence with a teachable and obedient heart: or at least with a true desire to have all these graces. For the benefit of all such it is written, "The power of the Lord was present to heal them." For their instruction and comfort, and for the awakening of the other sort, our Lord by His gracious providence ordered beforehand the "strange things" which we by faith have seen to day. He ordered matters so, that when the place where He was teaching was remarkably full, and many of these His subtle enemies were there, just at that very time a certain man sick of the palsy was brought to the place, distressed and so helpless, that they could not conveniently even lift him off the bed whereon he lay. Four persons brought him in his bed, to the door of the house or synagogue where our Lord was. But by the time they came to the door, they found the place so full, that it was quite impossible for them to bring their friend in. Then happened a lively instance of what our Lord meant when He said, "The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force." That is to say, there are some quite in earnest, who having once conceived a strong desire to please God and save their souls, having tasted, as the Apostle says, "the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come," cannot leave off, but persevere in their prayers and endeavours, let what will happen. So these four persons, having once heard of Christ so as to be convinced of His Divine mercy and power, make haste to bring their sick friend to Him, that he may

be healed: and because by reason of the press they cannot themselves approach to Him, what do they do? They ascend to the flat-roof of the house, and through a sort of trap-door in the roof they let down the poor man, his couch and all, into the midst before Jesus. Now, my brethren, which of you would have done so? Do you not see at once, what a great faith was manifested in this? Most persons, I suppose, would have drawn back from the outward door, when they found the place so crowded, and how impossible it was to get in. At least they would have said, Let us wait until the Lord has done speaking: then the multitude will begin to depart, and we shall find plenty of room to come near Him. Just as persons who draw near to Christ, merely because they are bidden, or for custom's sake: every difficulty is enough to daunt them, the slightest shower, or a small perplexity about dress, is a sufficient reason to keep them from Church: and when they are there, if a scornful person does but look at them, they feel as if they could not behave themselves properly. But these four persons, the bearers of the poor paralytic, did not only persist in drawing near to Christ, they ventured even to go on the roof, open the tiling, and let down the couch with the man on it. They did not mind the strange appearance, nor the outcry which might possibly be made. Why? Because they had in their hearts true love towards the poor man, and true faith in the power of Christ to heal him. They did not mind trifles: they cared not what people might think of them, it was nothing to them to have it said, How strange this is, how entirely out of the way! when they

knew it was the right way to deliver their poor friend from so great a misery.

But what is the saying of our Lord, with which He receives them? He addresses Himself to the poor man and says, "Son, be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." They came to have their friend's body healed, and his poor palsied limbs restored to action. Christ says no word to him about the body, but tells him of another kind of blessing: sin forgiven; the soul in a way to be cured. Now, had these bearers of the sick man been altogether like some who draw near, in our times, and in all times, to receive blessings from Christ in His Church, we know very well how they would have received such an answer as that. They would have said in scorn, We came for a real bodily deliverance, and He puts us off with words relating to things inward and spiritual. Why should we believe Him? What good are we to get by Him? In this profane way, or something like it, too many would now speak, if they found their spiritual good intended, when they were only looking for their temporal good. They would say, The man is putting us off: such words are cheap: we cannot now mind nor believe them. But the bearers of the paralytic did not so. They, and their distressed friend whom they were bearing, had faith, i. e. they believed that Jesus Christ was able to do this which they asked of Him. And our Lord, to encourage and reward their faith, goes on in His merciful purpose, giving first the spiritual blessing and afterwards the temporal. First, seeing their faith, He said to the sick of the palsy, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee." They

came for bodily health: but because they came in faith, He gives a much greater thing, even spiritual health. He gives them *that* blessing first, which though in itself beyond all comparison greater, would to the generality of men be less welcome, because it is invisible. Ask yourselves, my brethren, how *you* would have taken this. It will be no bad trial of yourselves, whether you have faith in you or no. If your conscience tells you that on hearing such an answer, even from our great Judge and Saviour, you would have been more or less vexed and disappointed, then you have reason to fear that you are very imperfect in the faith, very insufficiently weaned from your love of earthly things. These persons were not so: they had full trust in our Lord: and see how He crowned them with His favour. They were thankful for the invisible blessing, and He added on the outward and visible one. According to His own promise, they sought first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and the outward blessing, bodily health, was added unto them. Meantime the unbelieving Pharisees were busy in their hearts with all manner of evil thoughts. "Why doth this man thus speak blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God only?" It is just the word which worldly men, scorners without faith, have on their lips, when the holy Church of God speaks to them of great things to be wrought by our Saviour present in her holy ordinances. They say in their frowardness, How dare any mortal man to say in Christ's Name, 'I absolve thee from all thy sins?' How can it be right to suppose that one's being baptized by human hands has anything to do with re-

mission of sins, with taking off the soul's burden? How can any man think this? for "Who can forgive sins but God only?" As if any one supposed that the priest absolved, or forgave sins in Baptism, in his own name, and not in the Name of our most holy Saviour: as if we taught any other Baptism, any other Absolution, but His. But so it is: men do run on in this way, as the Pharisees did, just for the sake of finding fault. Then what says our Lord? First He gravely reproves them. "Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?" What they had said in the way of fretting, they had said inwardly, each man to himself, therefore our Lord's knowing it was a sign to them of His Divine knowledge, a token that He is indeed a Divine Person, knowing all the hearts of all the children of men. This, if they at all feared God, was enough to startle them and make them feel how Divine a Person He was, Whom they were using so unworthily. And He goes on to speak as one who indeed knoweth not only the hearts of men, but also the secret things of God. "Whether is easier to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee, or to say Arise and walk? But that ye may know that the Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith He to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house." As much as to say, "You reckon it a mere word when I say, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee:' and so, taken by itself, it *is* a mere word: just as it would be a mere word, were any who had not the gift of miracles to say to this poor man here, 'Rise and walk:' it would be a mere word, both would be mere words, if nothing came of them; one as

easily spoken as the other. But whereas one of these sayings relates to an inward and spiritual work, the other to an outward and visible one, I will now shew you that the inward work is real, by bringing to pass the outward work before your eyes: I say to this poor man, who is come here in faith, his own faith and his friends', 'Rise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house,' and when you see him do *that* at My bidding, you must needs be ashamed not to believe that My other word, 'Thy sins be forgiven,' is true and powerful, and works its proper work also. The miracle that you see is to you for a sign of the greater miracle which you do not see." This was no doubt part of our Lord's meaning, when He said to the sick of the palsy, "Rise, take up thy bed, and go into thine house," and it came immediately to pass: he rose, took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God. And so by one and the same act Christ both rewarded the faith of those who took so much pains to come to Him, and confounded them who found fault and would not believe.

But Christ in His way of working this miraculous cure did not only seal the blessing to that paralytic man and his friends, and to all who came to Him when He was here in faith, to have their sins forgiven: but He also confirmed it for ever to all His penitent servants, to all without exception who truly come to Him to have the bonds of their sins untied. For consider, my brethren: call to mind what we see continually in the Church. You see little infants brought here to the Font to be christened; that is a

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very common sight. I say, it is very much like what was done when the paralytic was brought to Jesus. For it is the same merciful and mighty Saviour Who was then teaching in the Synagogue in Capernaum, and is now constantly teaching, preaching, consecrating, interceding, baptizing, by each one of us His unworthy priests, with whom He has promised to remain always. There is Christ teaching: there is the multitude of believers, assembled to hear His words, and to see the great things which He doeth: there, too often, are some who rather scorn than believe in Him. Well; the child is brought: and it is in soul just like a paralytic: every child born into this world is so: it is by nature a child of wrath, an inheritor of Adam's sin, helpless, cold, dead to all really Christian works: unable to stir either hand or foot towards heaven. The child is brought, our Lord receives it in His Arms, by the hand of His minister He baptizes it with water, baptizes it into His own Body, into the Name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost, and so grants it perfect remission of the sin in which it was born: just as to the paralytic He said, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." And as to that poor man He said presently afterwards, "Take up thy bed and walk," so to these little children He in His Baptism gives power, spiritual power, to rise from the palsy of sin, and go on walking in the way of righteousness: and each one of you, boys and girls, who tries to be dutiful and keep the grace given in Baptism, each one of you is in the sight of the holy Angels not unlike to that paralytic, when at our Lord's command

he departed to his own house, as you move on towards heaven, your true home, glorifying God: according to the well known Psalm, "[a]O go your way into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise."

And another sight there is, which the holy Angels, I trust, see often in Christian Churches, and sometimes it is given to us to discern more or less of it: the blessed sight of a Christian person who by wilful sin has departed from the grace of his Baptism, and has become spiritually helpless, dead in his sins again; who has so benumbed and bound himself down by bad habits, that it seems as if he could not move hand or foot or any limb in God's service: even such an one brought to Christ by the prayers of the Church and of his loving and faithful brethren, who cannot bear to see him perish. I say, *we* behold sometimes, and the Angels who are around us behold, we trust, oftener than we do, when God hears the prayers of loving parents for undutiful children, of husbands and wives who are affectionate and faithful for wives or husbands who are not so, of brothers for their brethren, of friends for their friends, of pastors and people for one another, of the whole Church for each one of us. For a time He seems not to hear, He seems as if He were otherwise engaged, like our Lord in that crowded room: but persevere; be earnest, be patient; lay aside all incumbrances, press on towards Him in spite of all difficulties; be not hindered by false shame, nor by the fear of what people will say, but come to Church, come to Holy

[a] Ps. c. 3.

Communion, and pray there in your heart for your friends, and see if He pour you not out a great blessing. There is but one thing that can hinder it: unworthiness either in yourselves or in those for whom you pray. You fear this, and well you may: but let it not slacken you in your prayers for them; only take care to pray in earnest for yourself too; and watch your own behaviour in every part of it, and try to make it agree with your prayers. Then if the sinner for whom you pray make himself unworthy by his obstinacy, that will happen which our Lord said,—your peace will return to you again. But if he too relent, and allow himself to be brought; if there be but a spark of true faith in him; there is a promise, "he shall ask, and God will give life for them that sin not unto death." Jesus, seeing that man's faith, and the faith of those who bring him, will say, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins be forgiven thee."

So be it, O Lord, with all those who are brought before Thee in this Church, by their own prayers or the prayers of their friends. May no one of them all, by faithlessness or backsliding, make the loving intercession void. May the confessions be so said, morning and evening, and especially may the confession at Holy Communion be so said, that the Absolution which follows may be to each one a true remission of his sins. May those whose conscience is troubled with any weighty matter, have grace and Christian wisdom, humility and sincerity, to open their grief to Christ's ministers and ask Absolution in the way appointed by the Church. And being

absolved, whether in Church or at home, may we all "take up our bed and walk;" walk steadily and warily towards our home in heaven, bearing with us that whereon we lay—the constant remembrance of our own grievous sin and misery; and glorifying Him for our deliverance by such holy and humble obedience, that the whole multitude, all around us, when they see it, may seek His grace in like manner, and with us give praise unto God.

He does not neglect them one day, and remember them another; he does not provide them now and then with a full meal, and then leave them for a long time to take care of themselves; but as regularly as the day comes, he feeds them in green pastures, and leads them beside the still waters; they look for him at the appointed hour, and know that they may depend upon him; we see them gathering by the gate where he comes, their faces all turned the same way; they follow where he leads, and make no doubt of finding the wholesome herbage and fresh and living waters, which they long for.

Now what is it which answers to this in the Church and kingdom of heaven? Surely nothing so much as the regular returns of Church services and holy Sacraments. The very notion of a meal, to which our Lord so often compares His kingdom; the notion of His being their "meat indeed," and their "drink indeed," their daily bread, that by which they live, is joined in our minds, as we read or hear, with the notion of set hours and appointed places. We know that people's meals, whether at morning, noon, or evening, do them more good if they come at the expected times; we naturally desire to know when and where to look for them: and in all such sayings and parables, our Lord encourages us to hope for the like regular return of His spiritual and heavenly blessings.

Consider what is said, a little before the text, of the joys and glories prepared for the people of God. They are altogether bound up with holy times and places. The reward of those "who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and

clear and wholesome waters. So our Lord Jesus Christ, as it is in the Psalm, "feeds us in a green pasture, and leads us forth beside the waters of comfort." He feeds us with His own Body and Blood, He causes us to drink of His Spirit. As the shepherd searches out for his sheep the best and freshest pasture, as he attends particularly to the diseased and feeble, as he goes before them shewing them where they should be, and preparing and fencing in the most healthful and convenient places, as he finds out wholesome waters for their drink, and takes care that all may come to them; so does our Lord Jesus Christ, in His Church, for the sheep of His pasture, which are men, baptized, Christian men. He cares for all their needs; the heavenly food which He provides seems to us one and the same to all, but it is marvellously tempered and ordered as is said of the manna of old, to suit each person's own particular wants. The waters of His Spirit are divided to every man severally as He wills, and He wills what He knows will profit.

Now as His tender care is exercised particularly over those who are in trouble and destitution, in seeking the lost, bringing back the misguided, binding up the broken, strengthening the sick, carrying the lambs in His arms, and gently leading those that are with young; so the Holy Scripture seems especially to point out the constancy and regular returns of His mercy, as being that circumstance which above all others makes it the proper comfort and relief of the afflicted. Why may the sheep so entirely depend upon the shepherd? Because his care of them is so unfailing, so regular, so constant.

SERMON XXII.

GOD'S RETURNS OF COMFORT.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

REV. vii. 17.

"*The Lamb which is in the midst of the throne shall feed them, and shall lead them unto living fountains of waters: and God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes.*"

WHAT is the throne, but the throne of God, the place where He reigns in the light which no man can approach unto? And who is the Lamb in the midst of it, but our Lord Jesus Christ, God made Man, first redeeming us on the Cross, then returning with His human nature to His Father's right hand, and sitting down with Him on the throne of His glory? The Lamb of God, who taketh away the sins of the world, is here shewn to us as our Shepherd, sparing and dealing gently with His people, whom He hath redeemed with His precious blood. He is our Shepherd, to feed and to lead us.

We know that it is one great part of a shepherd's business to give his flock fodder from time to time, and to shew them and conduct them on the way to

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made them white in the Blood of the Lamb," is to be "before the throne of God, and to serve Him day and night in His temple, and to have Him that sitteth upon the throne dwelling among them." They will serve Him, as His servants serve Him in His temple. The type and shadow of our happiness in heaven, the nearest approach we can make to it on earth, is our solemn service done to Almighty God in His Church. There especially we may hope to find the green pastures and waters of comfort which the Good Shepherd provides for His own; for there especially He has promised to be. When the Jews heard of serving Him day and night in His temple, could they help thinking of the solemn offices of prayer and thanksgiving which they regularly offered up, not only at evening and morning and at noonday, but also, as another psalm tells us, standing, some of them, "by night in the house of the Lord, in the courts of the house of our God?" When the Christians of early days heard the same gracious promise, would not their thoughts as naturally turn to the services with which they prevented the night-watches, meeting as they did before daylight to sing hymns to our and their Lord Jesus Christ, and to receive the Holy Communion? So when we of the latter days read and hear those verses, do they not seem greatly to encourage us, in giving our best attendance on the holy offices, to which our mother, the Church, invites us not only weekly but daily? Do they not in a manner say to us, Serve God as often as you can in His holy place, and if you are hindered from coming there, yet offer up as regularly as you can your solemn services in your own house?

You are hungry and thirsty, you want refreshment and food, cool waters and tender grass; what so plain and natural, what so sure to obtain a blessing, as to come early and late where the Good Shepherd has promised to be, if not in body, yet in heart and mind? Kneel down before Him, say those prayers to Him which He has Himself taught you by His Church, praise and adore Him in the words of His divine psalms—the prayer-book, as it has been well called, which He and all His saints have used, from the day when He taught us to pray; listen reverently to His holy lessons, observe the times, weeks, hours, and days which He hallowed by His death and resurrection, and by the gifts of His Holy Spirit; do this diligently, not once nor twice, but as the rule of your life, with a reverent and obedient heart; try to do it always as in His presence, and see if the comfort and refreshment which you long for will not come.

I have mentioned what I take to be the substance of what Holy Scripture teaches, as to the great appointed remedy for tender and broken spirits. Supposing them, by God's mercy, either kept from deadly sin, or in the regular way to be cured of it, by true repentance and confession, it should seem that whatever else of pain and sorrow they endure, Jesus Christ stands ready to cure them of it in His own chosen times and places. Hours and forms of prayer, if possible in Church, else making your home a kind of Church, are the way in which our Blessed Redeemer, the Shepherd and Bishop of our souls, has promised to come near to heal our inward diseases. He has promised in such texts as these, "I

absolved, whether in Church or at home, may we all "take up our bed and walk;" walk steadily and warily towards our home in heaven, bearing with us that whereon we lay—the constant remembrance of our own grievous sin and misery; and glorifying Him for our deliverance by such holy and humble obedience, that the whole multitude, all around us, when they see it, may seek His grace in like manner, and with us give praise unto God.

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Consider what is said, a little before the text, of the joys and glories prepared for the people of God. They are altogether bound up with holy times and places. The reward of those "who came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and

they faint by the way." If you had been there fainting and hungry, and had heard those words, would it not have refreshed your souls, and relieved your anxiety at once? Why, then, be of good courage, when you hear Him by the voice of His Church telling you to ask Him for your daily bread: the one is as certain a token of His gracious presence and mind towards you, as the other was, had we but faith to receive it.

And if our coming in dutifulness to Christ's Church, or saying her prayers at home when we cannot come, has such a promise in respect of our earthly bread, how much more in respect of the Bread of Life, whereof that earthly bread is but a figure and shadow! If those who are severely tried with temporal afflictions are invited to come here for relief, how much more those who mourn because they know they have offended their Saviour, and fear lest the light of His countenance be withdrawn from them! If those do well to come here and pray, who know not which way to turn in the perplexities of this life, how much more those who doubt what they should do to please God, to perform their Christian task thoroughly, to heal the wounds of their sins and perfect their repentance! Surely it is a great thing, for a doubting and troubled conscience, to be divinely warranted in saying to itself, for so many minutes and hours of its time as the regular Church prayers take up, Whatever else is right or wrong, of this at least I am sure, that it must be right to try all I can to think of God and of Christ, and to forget my own bitter thoughts, so long as this service lasts. It is a great thing that we are permitted, though but for a short time, to hope

and labour for a sense of that heavenly Presence, which in its perfection and continuance is the fulness of joy.

So far, as I said, it seems that even such as we are may be able to understand, in some small measure, how constant waiting on Christ in Church services is the appointed cure and remedy for troubled minds: but who shall say how much more there is in it, beyond what we can possibly imagine or understand? Who shall set bounds to the blessings and graces, flowing out from God Incarnate, where He has especially promised to be? We know not what we do, indeed we know not what we do, when we make light of this His appointed way.

SERMON XXIII.

REJOICING IN PENITENCE.

TWENTIETH SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

Acts viii. 39.

"He went on his way rejoicing."

The person of whom S. Luke is here speaking had just been called by God's special providence, to faith and hope in Jesus Christ; and he had made haste to obey the call. He had been it seems, a sincere Jew, a true believer in the Scriptures of the Old Testament: and in obedience to these Scriptures, he had gone up at the appointed time, to worship God in His temple at Jerusalem. As he was returning, and sitting in his chariot, he employed himself in reading the Holy Scriptures, and the place of the Scripture which he read was the fifty-third chapter of the prophet Isaiah; that chapter, which of all others in the Old Testament bears special witness to the Cross of Christ; how "He was led as a lamb to the slaughter;" how "He poured out His soul unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors, and bare the sin of many."

While the eunuch was reading of these things,

the Holy Spirit of God sent to him expressly an Evangelist, S. Philip, to explain the meaning of that Scripture to him, and from it to preach unto him Jesus; an everlasting encouragement to every one who studies his Bible with a devout and teachable mind.

Such a mind was that of the Ethiopian eunuch in the text. By the grace of God he perceived and acknowledged the truth of what the Evangelist taught him, his own sinfulness, his need of a Redeemer, and the infinite mercy of Almighty God in sending His only Son Jesus Christ to die for him. Believing all this, he earnestly desired to be baptized, and so united to our Saviour, the very first opportunity that he found: and the saint granted his earnest wish: "they went down both of them into the water, both Philip and the eunuch, and he baptized him."

Thus, you see, God's special providence interfered to turn this devout and faithful Jew into a Christian, no less faithful and devout. Being so converted and baptized, he lost sight of his earthly teacher, the "Spirit of the Lord caught away Philip, that the eunuch saw him no more: but he went on his way rejoicing."

Upon these last words it seems natural to remark, what is the temper and disposition of mind in which people may be expected to go on their way, when they have sincerely received Christ's Gospel: received it into an *obedient* heart. The natural fruit of such good resolutions, the consequence of endeavouring to live by faith in Christ crucified, is joy, satisfaction, cheerfulness of mind. Such persons go on their way through life, rejoicing that they have

such a good and merciful God, a Father, a Saviour, and a Comforter, at every moment watching over them. They try in earnest to love and serve Him Who has done so much for them, and therefore, happen what may, it cheers them to remember and know, "that all things work together for good to such as love God."

This feeling, you will observe, did not make the eunuch turn out of his way. "He *went on* his way rejoicing." He still pursued his worldly calling, as it was his duty to do; but with more life and spirit, more cheerfulness and energy than before. For now he had clearly set before him the blessed hope of everlasting life, with which God, for Christ's sake, had promised to crown his sincere endeavours. The prize of his high calling, constantly in view, would naturally make him not less but more industrious, not more indifferent to other men, but more anxious to do them good; more careful of his time, more fervent in spirit, more open and awake to all the reasons for thankfulness, with which God's bounty has filled the world.

Such is the frame and turn of mind, for which in her collect for this day the Church has taught us to ask our Maker: "Of Thy bountiful goodness keep us, we beseech Thee, from all things that may hurt us: that we, being *ready* both in body and soul, may *cheerfully* accomplish those things that Thou wouldest have done." If we mean what we say, when we use this prayer, we resign ourselves up, our souls and bodies, entirely into the hands of God: not pretending to judge for ourselves, what will hurt us and what not: this we leave to His merciful consideration,

beseeching Him only to judge for us, and to ward off from us those things which He knows to be really evil, though we, in our blindness, should even desire them. Leaving all the rest in His hands, we beg, distinctly, this one blessing: that He would keep us ready for His service, and enable us cheerfully to do His will.

Now this Christian cheerfulness may be considered in two ways: both as a privilege, and as a duty. As a privilege, it is surely the greatest of earthly comforts, to have what are called "good spirits," and to be enabled to serve God in our calling *heartily*. But here people must be on their guard: for a mistake about the privilege of Christian cheerfulness may be very painful and very hurtful too. Devout and sincere men are not to depend upon having "better spirits" always, in every sense of that expression. The collect hints as much by its mention of the *body*, the condition of which every one knows has a great effect on spirits: of course, then, whatever reasons God in His wise providence may have for trying good persons with pain and sickness, the same reasons, if we could know them, would account in good measure for their dejection and low spirits.

Yet still it will hold true, that the more thoroughly devout and resigned you are, the better chance you have of this great blessing, a cheerful heart. Sickness or sorrow may cast you down: but having a sure arm to lean on, you will not sink so low as you would otherwise, nor find so much difficulty in reviving. In short, true devotion, patiently and calmly practised, has power, by God's blessing, sooner or later, to take out the sting of melancholy itself: ex-

cept where God, in His secret and sovereign goodness, permits the very mind to be diseased. In all other cases of dejection whatsoever, true repentance, and resignation of yourself to God in Christ Jesus, is the true secret of a cheerful spirit.

For instance: could ever any thing be imagined, more likely to make a sick man cheerful, than the sure and comfortable hope of being restored to perfect health, before many years are past? It may not always overcome, or even seem to assuage, the feeling of bodily pain and languor: but surely, such a hope as this must do a great deal towards keeping up their spirits; must come over them, like a refreshing gale, at times when they most want it; and must render their intervals of ease and quiet infinitely more delightful and consoling. The reasonable hope of everlasting life and health will turn every half hour of abated pain into a great blessing indeed, a spiritual as well as earthly blessing. It makes it a sort of token or pledge, of the rest prepared for the faithful in heaven.

Again: what should make a labouring man cheerful, if not the knowledge of having a friend near him, strong and able, and ready and willing, to bear all his burthen for him? Now, this is just their feeling, who consider as they ought the presence of the Holy Spirit, the power of God promised, in answer to hearty prayer, to purify our corrupt nature, and help us to do works pleasing to God. If they were left to themselves, they might fear, that it was too hard a task for them to keep the commandments, that their being holy (and of course their being happy) was out of the question. As it is, they have

every encouragement to work out their own salvation with peace and joy, as well as with fear and trembling: knowing that it is God which worketh in them both to will and to do of His good pleasure.

But, what is still more to the purpose: he who seriously considers *and practises* the faith which Jesus Christ has taught us; he, and he only, may reasonably hope to have his sins forgiven. And surely, next to the sense of being *innocent* (which no child of Adam can have), the sense of being *pardoned* is the most cheering of all things. Now, this is what no one need doubt, who will look steadily to the Cross of Christ, and own Him for his Saviour, not only by his lips, but in his life.

And let us not mistake this matter. Very many, too many, seem easy and quiet in their minds, have no misgivings about being pardoned, because, in good truth, they have not considered the thing seriously: they have gone on taking for granted that all is right, and they are as good as their neighbours: they have nothing like a correct notion, how much they have to be pardoned for. Now, the indifference of such thoughtless men may make them seem mirthful and gay; but it can never be a source of real cheerfulness: whereas he who sincerely thinks over his sins, and by the grace of God sincerely forsakes them, he has a thought of consolation in store for every unemployed and wakeful hour: he may indulge and dwell upon the hope of being pardoned at the last day, and coming, at last, to God's eternal joy. It is not possible, in the nature of things, for one who has this strong upon his mind, not to be cheerful and light of heart, compared with what he would be

otherwise. He will naturally "serve the Lord his God with joyfulness, and with gladness of heart, for the abundance of all" spiritual blessings.

Moreover, true penitence is the very course to secure and multiply to yourself the enjoyment of all innocent earthly blessings. The thousand reasons for satisfaction and cheerfulness, which our Maker has so bountifully scattered around us, fine weather, fruitful seasons, wonderful works of nature or of man, all the comforts and conveniences of life, even the kindness of friends and relations, tell for something, when the mind is at ease, and disposed to be thankful: otherwise, they are either hardly noticed, or come mixed with much of bitterness. But the only sure way to have your mind *constantly* at ease, the only way to be, *habitually*, thankful, is to fix your thoughts on *heaven:* to look at things with a *Christian* eye: to be aware, by God's grace, how little one deserves, and so to be always prepared for thankfulness, wondering, inwardly in your heart, that the righteous Judge of heaven and earth should prove, daily and hourly, so kind to one of whom He knows so much evil. I say, inwardly in your heart: for these are feelings not rashly to be talked of, lest they spend themselves in mere talk. A deep sense of one's own unworthiness, and a disposition to receive whatever good happens as a token of God's mercy, prepared for the penitent in Christ, this is the *root* of Christian cheerfulness, enabling a thoughtful person to enjoy things around him, in a way which he could not else have imagined; but being the *root*, it lies deep and hidden, it will not bear to be rudely exposed, shewn and boasted of in all com-

panies. It is enough, if God sees it in the heart, and attentive observers know it by its fruits: by the frank, kind, and open manner in which such a person will enjoy and communicate the common pleasures and accommodations of life; by his watching to be thankful, both to God and man; by his good tempered way of making the best of whatever happens that is irksome and unpleasant; by bearing all things, believing all things, hoping all things, enduring all things.

These, and other such as these, are symptoms of a joy truly devout, more to be trusted than much talking, even among men's intimate friends, of what passes in their own mind and conscience. Not that words can do no good; but the matter, I believe, stands nearly as follows. Take care, first of all, that your joy in God makes you benevolent, thankful, contented, charitable in your *ways*; and then your *words*, without any study or any particular care of yours, will shew what you are, and do the good you wish for. "For out of the abundance of the heart," our Saviour has told us, "the mouth speaketh."

To go on his way rejoicing, then, appears to be the privilege of a sincere penitent, both for the deep and solid comfort which his devout thoughts bring with them; and also because the mind of such an one, being comparatively at rest and ease, is more open to the many marks of God's fatherly care, by which we are surrounded on every side; and because, knowing his own unworthiness, he silently confesses, that every mercy to him is a wonder.

In such proportion as men have arrived, really,

soberly, and practically, at this temper, so far, they may hope, they are sharers in that heavenly grace, which S. Paul has mentioned as a great part of the kingdom of God, that is to say, "joy in the Holy Ghost." And let a man's circumstances be what they will, let his mind be ever so clouded for the time, where there lies, at the bottom of all, the reasonable hope of a good conscience in Christ Jesus, there, you may be sure, is this joy also.

And it is men's duty, as well as their privilege: a duty, not simply to be cheerful (for wicked men may be so for a time, and children, and thoughtless persons, are so generally, and so are the riotous and intemperate, in some sense, while their fit of gaiety lasts), but cheerfulness, so far as it is a Christian duty, is well and exactly expressed in the collect for the day: "cheerfully to accomplish those things which God would have done," is the exact notion of Christian cheerfulness. It is the same as being "fervent in spirit, serving Christ:" it is the same as "doing what we do *heartily*, as to the Lord, and not unto men:" that is to say, for God's sake, and not for any praise or reward that is to be had in this world.

Whoever in earnest is so minded will obey God's commandments with a certain alacrity, like a loyal soldier in the presence of his king employed on some honourable service: he will not get through it like a burthen and a task, but will take a pride (if I may so speak) in doing it as well as ever he can.

You see at once, that such cheerfulness is very unlike mere bodily spirits: they, in truth, very often, tell just the contrary way. To be naturally

very gay and lively, proves very hurtful to many persons, and hinders them from doing what God would have done. Christian cheerfulness is then most perfect, when people exert themselves sweetly and patiently, in spite of feebleness and natural dejection.

Again, it is not to be judged of hastily, whether it be in yourself, or in others. Some men are eager and earnest for a while, as long as religion, or some point in religion, has something new to strike their fancy with; and this may look at first like Christian cheerfulness, but indeed is a very different thing. Christian cheerfulness, as was just now said, is more like the spirit of a soldier, who has more to learn, than simply how to meet danger. It is easy in comparison to do that, in the tumult and hurry of battle, which of themselves help to keep up the spirits. But the faithful Christian, like the loyal soldier, must take cheerfully whatever station, whatever employment, his master assigns him, let it be never so lonely and wearisome, never so unaccountable to his judgement. He may not give up his active obedience to his Maker, when things seem most against him, and he appears least to get on: remembering always, that prudence and consideration is a part of that active obedience.

Is this, think you, too much to require of weak men in a bad world? Do not say so, till you have first tried what will take place in your own mind and heart, upon turning to God so far, as to have a reasonable hope that you are sincere in His service. I say, a reasonable and *scriptural* hope; a hope grounded on God's word, not on flattering fancies

of men; such a hope as you cannot have, till by the help of God's Holy Spirit you have fairly begun to break yourself in earnest of all your wilful and habitual sins. Exactly in the same measure that you do this, you may reasonably hope (if no disease of body or mind hinder) to feel a sort of satisfaction in God's Presence, like the satisfaction which a faithful servant feels, where he knows that his master is looking on his well-meant endeavours.

This will make your hours of prayer more welcome, and more especially those spent in the Church and at the Altar: since there and then it is that Christ has promised to draw nearest unto His servants. This will make you watchful and kind in your family: little trifles will not vex you, whilst you are busied, as in God's sight, doing your best for the souls entrusted to you. This will help you to be fervent in business, yet to feel all the while above it; and to be nobly negligent of tempting and dangerous pleasures.

Finally this joy in God, having accompanied you through life, will help you to die the death of a Christian. But remember: this whole chain of blessings is lost, except you keep hold of the first link; and that is, practical amendment. "The kingdom of God is" *first* "righteousness," *then* "peace and joy in the Holy Ghost."

SERMON XXIV.

THE SECRET OF TRUE COURAGE.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

DANIEL iii. 18.

"Be it known unto thee, O king that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up."

WHO does not love and honour a brave man, as such? Who would not wish to be like him, so far as his bravery goes? whether that bravery be shewn in doing or suffering. As for example, (during the late war, which has now happily come to an end,) I suppose there was no one of us, who was not at times carried away as it were, by his strong feelings of admiration and respect for the many brave men we heard and read of, who in battles or sieges "loved not their lives unto the death," or (what was still harder) were content and cheerful while for duty's sake they were losing limbs, bearing torment from pain or disease, wearing themselves out day and night with all manner of discomfort and misery. We honoured and admired them, and I may say, we could not help loving them; and although few of us would wish to be tried as they were, yet every one of us, I am sure,

would wish, *if* such a trial or any thing like it were by God's providence laid upon him, to bear it as they did. There is not one of us who can look forward at all, but would give a good deal to be truly courageous in heart, whether for the enduring what cannot be helped, or for the accomplishing of what ought to be done.

Well, my brethren, our Almighty and loving Father, Who hath put this feeling in our hearts, hath not left us ignorant of the way to obtain satisfaction for it. Suppose a weak woman, or a simple child, or otherwise of a tender spirit, and who has read or heard much of the many trials of life. Such an one perhaps cannot help expecting and foreboding pains and griefs and temptations, likely, as it seems, to come upon himself, and he wonders how he shall ever get through them. Scripture seems to say to such an one, You wish for courage and calmness of heart, and long to be like those who you think have such a heart; whom you see bearing bravely and cheerfully what your very nature shrinks from beforehand. Especially you long for *spiritual* courage, the grace of not caring for human fears and sufferings, when the will of God is to be done. Here then, in such histories as the Church teaches you to-day out of the book of Daniel you may find a perfect and certain cure for that evil disease of spiritual cowardice, which has been the ruin of so many souls. It is simply this: that by the grace of God blessing your prayers and endeavours you obtain that great gift, a strong will and determination to do right, come what may of it: that you just use yourself to be as obstinate in goodness, as too many are, as per-

haps you yourself have hitherto been, in mischief and in vanity. Although stubbornness is a bad name, yet is there a holy and righteous stubbornness; such as we read of in the prophets: "[a] As an adamant harder than flint have I made thy forehead: fear them not, neither be dismayed at their looks, though they be a rebellious house:" such as our Lord speaks of in His own and His people's name: "[b] The Lord God will help Me, therefore shall I not be confounded: therefore have I set My face like a flint, and I know that I shall not be ashamed."

Look at these three young men whom the Holy Ghost sets before us for an example in the first lesson this morning, there they are, standing by the side of the burning fiery furnace: before them is the golden image, and close to them and around them Nebuchadnezzar the greatest king that had yet been in the whole earth, with all his princes, great men, and guards: with all kinds of music, and with all the pomp and power of the world. All these have been worshipping: and if they will worship too, they will in all appearance not only preserve their lives, but continue in the credit and honour which they have already acquired, being set over the affairs of the province of Babylon. On the other hand, if they will not worship, there is no help for it, the king will command these soldiers who are standing by, "the most mighty men which are in his army, to bind Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, and to cast them into the burning fiery furnace" which had been heated seven times more than it was wont to be heated. The three young men know all this, they

[a] Ez. iii. 9. [b] Is. l. 7.

are quite aware that humanly speaking there is no hope nor help for them: they see that every one else has worshipped, and they hear the music, apt, as we may well suppose, to carry and sweep away all their good purpose at once. How do they take it all? how do they behave? Why, none of these things move them in the least: they tell the king, "we are not careful to answer thee in this matter:" i. e. it gives us no trouble at all: we have no occasion to stop and consider what we should say. For indeed that was being fulfilled in them, which our Saviour afterwards promised to His Apostles and martyrs. "When they bring you unto magistrates and powers, take no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say, for the Holy Ghost shall teach you in the same hour what ye ought to say." The Holy Ghost the Spirit of counsel and of might, He Who is not "the Spirit of cowardice, but of power and of love and of a sound mind," He taught those three men then to say to Nebuchadnezzar, "[c] If it be so," (i. e. if such be His blessed Will,) "our God Whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and He will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not," (i. e. if it be not His mind so to deliver us) "be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up." Their answer was just simply this, 'We will not commit this idolatry, come what will: we will have no other God but the God of our fathers, neither will we fall down and worship any image, no not even what thou hast set up.' Thus they spake,

[c] Dan. iii. 17. 18.

and we know what was done to them, and how marvellously they were delivered. But had they not been delivered in the sight of men, had they died the death which S. John Baptist and S. Stephen and all the martyrs died after them, their example would have taught us just the same: viz. that the way, the only way, to stand against all dangers, spiritual and bodily, is to have a strong will, strong because it leans upon God, to keep His commandments at all risks. They would not do the wrong thing, and there was an end: they entered into no debate, no parleying nor argument with the tempter: with them it was as with their Master and ours, "Get thee behind Me satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God and Him only shalt thou serve." When the devil heard that word, he left our Saviour: and so when he perceives in any of our Saviour's servants a strong and inflexible resolution not even to attend to what he says, he is thoroughly baffled: being so resisted, he flies. And as the Angels were presently at hand to minister to Jesus, so are they to wait upon all such as courageously stand at all risk against the present temptation whatever it be. They, the good Angels, or if so it were the immediate Hand of God did not seldom in the days of Christian martyrdom so quench the violence of fire or whatever other cruel torment the malicious foe had devised against them, that they really seemed to feel nothing of it: their flesh might be racked or torn, or burned, but their spirit was so engaged and lifted up with the wonder working Presence of their Saviour that it seemed to make no difference to them. As we heard of those three young men, they walked

in the midst of the fire and had no hurt: or as we read in the Apocrypha, "[d] the Angel of the Lord made the midst of the furnace as it had been a moist whistling wind, so that the fire touched them not at all, neither hurt nor troubled them." "[e] And when they came out, all around beheld them, that on their bodies the fire had no power, nor was an hair of their head singed, neither were their coats changed, nor the smell of fire had passed on them."

All this, my brethren, concerns you and me as much as it doth those who are at any time called to glorify God with their bodies, by giving them to the flame, to the sword or to any other sort of martyrdom, rather than deny the Faith or break any of God's plain commandments. For though we are not so tried, yet somehow we are sure to be tried, in our measure perhaps quite as severely, though in a more inward and spiritual way. We are not cast into Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, but there are other fires, fires kindled by the prince of this world. There is the fire of filthy lust: there is the fire of worldly greediness and love of money. They are close at hand: they may seize upon us at any moment: the Evil one is always by, watching how he may light them within us, and our poor frail fallen souls and bodies are but too much like dry fuel prepared for such fires of hell to kindle upon. How are we in any wise to be secure? "[f] Wherewithal (e. g.) shall a young man cleanse his way," that he break not the law of purity, and so make himself unfit to see God? The Holy Ghost answers, "by ruling himself

[d] Song of the three Children, 27. [e] Dan. iii. 27.
[f] Ps. cxix. 9.

after Thy word." Observe the expression "*ruling* himself" or "keeping himself." The flesh must be held in as it were with a strong hand, i. e. with a firm and steady resolution not to give way in the least to what you know our Lord has forbidden. Do not say, This is impossible: God cannot expect it of me. Look to the example of Joseph, that highly favoured one, written down on purpose to be a pattern to such as are tempted. His trial was perhaps as severe in its way as the trial of the three in the furnace, and as they escaped, so did he, and so may you escape also unharmed from any kind and degree of temptation: i. e. simply by having and keeping up a strong and brave purpose that by the grace of God you will not give way: you will not consent to the wickedness proposed to you, no not in the slightest degree. So did the three Children; "We will not serve thy gods:" so the holy Joseph: "How can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" That by God's grace was sufficient for him: he did not stop to argue the matter with himself, as too many might have done in his place: 'My life is in extreme danger: to deny this woman is giving myself up to be slain: God will be merciful to me this once, and I will take care to keep myself out of the way of being so tempted any more.' That pure and religious young man knew better than to dally with temptation in that way: he just refused to have any thing to do with it, and got out of its reach as fast as he could.

And as Joseph and thousands of holy young persons besides have escaped the fire of filthy lust, so to others has been granted especial victory over the

fire of covetous and worldly desires: over the love of money, which is the root of all evil, a slow fire silently devouring the very heart of true faith and godliness. S. Matthew was delivered from this in a moment, when he left *all*, rose up, and followed Christ at His call. He was in the very midst of that fire, just as we may suppose a person to be, whose whole time and thoughts are taken up in pursuing some gainful business, and who have never been taught to set their hearts on any thing better: such was Levi at the receipt of custom: but the Son of God spake to him, and he came clean out of the fire. Why? because God gave him a heart and courage so to do: and so He has to thousands, who like S. Matthew have in one way or another left all and followed Him: but as S. Matthew had to "rise up" in order to do so, so must every rich man, every busy man, who would be saved, have a heart and will to obey Christ, and give up the world gladly, when He shall call on him to do so. And He has called on us all to do so, once for all in holy Baptism, and again in holy Confirmation. From time to time, continually in our daily life, He calls on us to renew this our renouncing of the world, by giving up some worldly profit in order to please Him: and it is often very hard to forego that profit. The thought will come, Every one else does the same, why should I be so particular? What is to help us through the temptation? We must have a strong will to overcome it. How may we obtain and secure such a good will? Even as S. Matthew at the receipt of custom: as Joseph when his mistress tempted him: as those holy young men in the furnace. We must train

ourselves beforehand to such trials by looking on to the great things out of sight. "Our God Whom we serve," said the martyrs, "is able to deliver us." How did they know that? It had been their constant exercise, in prayer morning and evening, and in watching all day long, to think of God as present, and as Almighty.

The Son of God was with them in the fire: and we know, perhaps more certainly than they did, that He is with us in the fire of temptation. However hard the times may be, men need not steal nor cheat, for He is there to feed them; how violent soever may be their carnal temptations, they need not sin, for He is with them in the midst of the fire.

It was not a new thing to those three young men, to practise a holy obstinacy, not to give way to false shame, to set their hearts and faces like a flint, not to be put out of countenance in doing what they knew to be right. From the first entrance into the king's court at Babylon, though the temptations were very strong, they following Daniel's guidance had made up their minds not to defile themselves "[g] with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine which he drank:" and by the gracious providence of God they had been enabled to keep their purpose. Their religious fasting and self-denial in ordinary things had so trained them in their Lord's school, that they were enabled to bear the hardest things, even martyrdom itself, when the trial came. It was in comparison as nothing in their eyes.

One more great thing there was in all these holy martyrs and confessors, without which all the rest

[g] Dan. i. 8.

doing right things, nor give way to wrong ones, in order to be like persons whom you believe to be good and respectable. You and they will in the end have each to bear his own burthen, and that which would be intolerable in you may for aught you know be tolerable in them.

In a word, my brethren, Fear God in earnest, and you need have no other fear. Serve Him not only in faith but in true patience and humility of heart, and the world itself, which now perhaps blames you, will bye and bye own that you were in the right: as Nebuchadnezzar did of the three children: and that when you seemed most alone, and your doings most strange and unaccountable, the Son of God was walking with you in the very midst of the fire, and taking care that you got no hurt.

SERMON XXV.

THE DOWNFALL OF PRIDE.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

DANIEL iv. 37.

"*Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven all Whose works are truth, and His ways judgement: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase.*"

THIS is the confession of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, the greatest king of the first and greatest empire among those, which at sundry times the enemies of God have been allowed to set up. It is a very remarkable confession, considering it only as the acknowledgment of a mighty and proud king, thoroughly and sincerely humbled before his God.

But a few years before, this same Nebuchadnezzar had been so lifted up with pride and self-sufficiency, that he did not scruple to require of all men, on pain of being burned alive, to worship an image of himself. And even when God by miracle had cured him of that extreme of impious delusion, he was yet open to feelings of irreligious vanity. As he walked in his palace of Babylon, he said to himself, admiring his own work, without any thought of the God Who gave him the power to do it, "Is not this great

Babylon, which I have built for the house of the kingdom, by the might of my power, and for the honour of my majesty?" While the word was yet in the king's mouth, there fell a voice from heaven, which when he heard he lost his reason, and for a certain time roamed about among the beasts of the field, eating grass as one of them. At the end of that time his reason returning unto him, and his subjects again putting themselves under his dominion, he made the confession in the text; a noble confession in the mouth of a heathen king, and containing that which is the foundation of all piety, whether in heathen, Jew, or Christian: That God, the King of heaven, is alone to be praised, and honoured; that all His works are just, and His ways righteousness; and that the end of all pride must be to abase itself before Him.

The humiliation of so great a monarch as Nebuchadnezzar, in the sight of the whole world, both of the Jews, whom he had brought low, and of the Babylonians, who were inclined to make him an idol, was in itself a great example of God's power over the hearts of men, and a powerful witness before the heathen to the Name and honour of the true and only God.

But the case is still more remarkable, full of deeper and diviner meaning, when we regard Nebuchadnezzar, king as he was of Babylon, and chief leader of the enemies of the people of God, as the type and pattern of the great Antichristian power,-the power of this world, opposed from the beginning to the kingdom of the saints of the Most High, and the power of His Christ. Looking at Nebuchadnezzar

in this light, we see that his humiliation was also a type and pattern of the complete victory, one day to be attained, by the Christian Church, over all opposing forces. And we know from our Saviour's own lips, that this is a warfare in which we must take part. We cannot stand idly by, helping neither Christ nor Antichrist. Whether we think of it or no, we are either with our Lord or against Him; either gathering His Church and fold with Him, or scattering it abroad. We see that this history of the proud king of Babel brought low does immediately concern us all: either we are on Christ's side, and then our faith and hope is strengthened by seeing His proudest enemy thus confess His Name; or we are yet disposed to take part with the world, Christ's enemy: and then it must be good for us to have before our eyes so aweful a token of the ruin, the shame, and misery, which human souls bring upon themselves, when they think of doing without God; though they be the wisest and greatest of all, according to this world's judgement of wisdom and greatness.

Now that Nebuchadnezzar was indeed a type or pattern of the great Antichristian power, we may well discern from the following considerations:

First, Babylon, of which he was king, is every where named in Scripture as opposed to Jerusalem; it is the proper name of the city of the world, as opposed to the city of God. For Babylon is the same as Babel, the city of confusion, as Isaiah calls it. And Babel, we know, was the place where first the great Antichristian power began to set itself openly and professedly against the will of God. At

Babel the whole earth was gathered together, being of one language and of one speech, and trying with one accord what they could accomplish in defiance of the Most High God. And as in this case Nebuchadnezzar was humbled by a sudden stroke depriving him of reason, on which he had proudly trusted, as self-sufficient to guide the world, and subdue it entirely to himself without God; so were the builders of Babel ashamed and confounded, when God by miracle came down and confused their language, so that they could not understand one another to carry on their work. In both cases, it was by their proud feelings themselves, that the punishment of their pride came upon them.

We may easily imagine some part of the shame and vexation, when those who were employed about the tower of Babel found that it was in vain for them to speak one to another; that their wise and skilful plans were all at a stand, for want of ways to make known their meaning to their companions. And when Nebuchadnezzar awaked from his madness, we may be sure he felt most deeply, how he had exposed himself, how the great God, in Whose sight he had boasted himself, had found out a way to fill him with shame, instead of the glory which he was dreaming of. Thus we see, that both in his pride and in his punishment, Nebuchadnezzar was but one instance of what Babel has been from the beginning; its sin, self-sufficiency; its punishment, shame and confusion.

It is true, the seat of the great Antichristian empire was not at first Babel, but rather Nineveh, that great city, of which so much is said in the earlier

prophets of the Jews; Nineveh, to which those kings of Assyria belonged, who first carried away the ten tribes, or kingdom of Israel, from Samaria, and afterwards, in the time of Hezekiah, were only prevented from destroying Jerusalem by an angel slaying 184,000 at once. But yet we are given to understand, that Babylon, rather than Nineveh or any other place, was chosen to be the head-quarters, if one may so say, the mother city, of the enemies of God and His people: not only because, as was just now said, it was there that the city of confusion was first set up, but also because not Nineveh, but Babylon after the destruction of Nineveh, was permitted to prevail against Judah and Jerusalem itself, the very chosen tribe and city of Jehovah, where the temple and the ark were; waited on by the true priests, the sons of Aaron, and protected by the highly-favoured family of David. In a word, Babylon was that heathen empire which at that time was brought into closest enmity with God's true though fallen Church, and that in the reign and person of Nebuchadnezzar. For in his time were carried captive, one after another, three kings of Judah, the temple was burned, and the walls of Jerusalem quite levelled with the ground; and the land for seventy years was left in comparison desolate.

Again, it appears from many occasional hints in the prophecies, especially Daniel, and it is known from heathen historians, that Babylon in the time of Nebuchadnezzar was especially beautiful and glorious, and looked as if it would last for ever. Also, that Nebuchadnezzar himself was a king of extraordinary valour, wisdom, and spirit: a thorough

sample or specimen of what this world entitles "a great man."

For these reasons, as it should seem, it pleased the Almighty to choose out Nebuchadnezzar as the one hero of the ancient heathen world, in whom He would most effectually prove to mankind His thorough command of the Antichristian power every where, and His way of dealing with those who walk in pride. Thus in the very beginning of the slavery and trouble which His Church was to experience from the great ones of the earth, it pleased Him graciously to provide her with a clear and sure token, in a most remarkable and public way, of what the end of all this should be, and how vainly those earthly potentates, which are but rods and scourges in the hand of the Lord, should ever raise themselves up against Him Who wields them.

There are three chapters in the book of Daniel, which give us some account of Nebuchadnezzar, and very remarkable is the difference between the three; how they shew, one after another, the gradual amendment and cure of his pride, as he felt God's hand heavier upon him.

First, God sent him a dream of a great image, of different materials, gold, silver, brass, and iron mingled with clay; smitten and ground small by a stone, which afterwards became a great mountain and filled the whole earth. Here was a plain prophecy, for so the prophet Daniel by the Holy Ghost immediately explained it, of the four great empires, or manifestations of the spirit of this world, engaged in warfare with the Churches, whether Jewish or Christian. What the vision was, the king could not at first re-

collect, God's providence so ordering it, on purpose that Daniel, being appealed to, might shew the wisdom which he had from the true God, by revealing the secret which the king himself had forgotten. Yet even this wonderful token of God's infinite power and wisdom had no further effect, that we read of, on Nebuchadnezzar, except making him honour God, as one among many who could truly reveal secrets. He was for offering incense to Daniel, and treating him as a god himself; acknowledging his God to be a God of gods, and a Lord of lords, and a revealer of secrets. It was the first rude beginning of goodness, in a generous untaught heathen, but it did not at all go to the root of the matter: it left the king, both in heart and profession, as much a heathen and idolater as ever.

This he shewed presently after, by making that image of gold, of which you heard in the lesson for this morning. Most likely the hint of it was taken from the image which he had seen in his dream: he wanted to make his dream a reality, only that instead of a mixture of metals, he made this statue *all* of gold; which metal, you will observe, stood for the Babylonian empire in the vision which he had seen: so that by making the whole image out of gold, he would give people to understand that he meant it to represent his own power, and that of his city Babylon. By commanding it to be worshipped, therefore, he was in fact commanding himself and Babylon to be worshipped: thus literally causing persons to bow down to the world instead of God.

And this would seem to be what in a certain place the Revelation of S. John calls, "causing the world

to worship the image of the beast," that is, of the Antichristian power. It is being on the world's, or Babylon's side, in this great quarrel between her and the Church.

However, Nebuchadnezzar did not long continue in the persecution of impiety, with which he that day begun. You heard how three men, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, refusing to bow down to the image, were cast into the fiery furnace; and how God sent an angel, who walked with them in the midst of the fire, and delivered them. In His purposes of mercy towards Nebuchadnezzar, God permitted him to see that angel, and opened his heart to understand that great miracle; so that, as before he acknowledged the Lord to be a God, so he now acknowledged Him a greater God than any other; forbidding, under pain of death, that any one should speak against Him, and declaring that "there was no other God that could deliver after that sort."

When we compare this acknowledgment with the conduct of others, such as Pharaoh and Balaam, on being favoured with a near view of the mighty works of God for His people, the comparison is surely much in Nebuchadnezzar's favour; there is a frankness in publicly owning himself wrong, and an eagerness to redress that wrong as far as possible, worthy of a noble, free, and generous spirit. There is no double dealing with God, no endeavour to escape from his duty; he reverses the sentence at once, and that eagerly, and makes haste to honour God's martyrs as he might, promoting "Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, in the province of Babylon."

At the same time we perceive that it was the good

feeling of the moment, rather than any deliberate and lasting principle, which wrought this change in the conduct of Nebuchadnezzar; partly, perhaps, by the extreme zeal of his decree, whereby he enacted that a single word spoken against the God of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego, should be punished with death, and destruction of the whole family of the person so offending; but chiefly, because the very words of this decree seem to shew, that the king did not yet comprehend that first truth of religion, "The Lord our God is one Lord." For his words are, "There is no other God that can deliver after this sort." Other gods he still thought there were, but none equal to so great a deliverance as that.

He being thus imperfect in the faith, and still exposed to all the temptations of the first and most royal place in the whole world, it is no wonder if he had yet a grievous fall to go through, before he could become thoroughly humbled and religious in heart. And this, the third stage in God's marvellous dealings with Nebuchadnezzar, is related in the chapter from which the text is taken, the fourth of Daniel. And what is very much to be observed, it is related not in Daniel's words, but in the words of Nebuchadnezzar himself; that singular honour being shewn to him, though a Gentile, and for most part of his life the very head of the Antichristian power, and chief enemy of God's people, that he should be the writer of one whole chapter in the inspired prophetical Scriptures of God; moved, no doubt, by that Holy and Blessed Spirit, by Whose inspiration, as we know, all Scripture is given. That which was said of Saul, with some astonishment, might be said also naturally

in this case, 'Is Nebuchadnezzar also among the prophets? Is the king of Babylon, the head of the oppressors, the destroyer of Jerusalem, raised up to confess and proclaim the only and unequalled majesty of the God of Jerusalem?'

So it is: God's all-seeing eye perceived something in the mind of this haughty monarch, which made him a fit subject of this special miraculous interference; and that there might be no question of its being His interference, He warned him of it, as Pharaoh sometime was warned, in a dream.

He "saw a tree in the midst of the earth, and behold the height thereof was great. The tree grew, and was strong, and the height thereof reached unto heaven, and the sight thereof to the end of all the earth: the leaves thereof were fair, and the fruit thereof much, and in it was meat for all: the beasts of the field had shadow under it, and the fowls of the heaven dwelt in the boughs thereof, and all flesh was fed of it. I saw in the visions of my head upon my bed, and, behold, a watcher and an holy one came down from heaven; he cried aloud, and said thus, Hew down the tree, and cut off his branches, shake off his leaves, and scatter his fruit: let the beasts get away from under it, and the fowls from his branches: nevertheless leave the stump of his roots in the earth, even with a band of iron and brass, in the tender grass of the field; and let it be wet with the dew of heaven, and let his portion be with the beasts in the grass of the earth."

So far the dream spoke of a tree: then on a sudden the language changed, and it became plain that some human being was meant, "Let his portion be with

the beasts in the grass of the earth: let his heart be changed from man's, and let a beast's heart be given unto him; and let seven times pass over him. This matter is by the decree of the watchers, and the demand by the word of the Holy Ones: to the intent that the living may know that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will, and setteth up over it the basest of men."

This dream the king saw, and not being able to make it out (although he well understood that it boded some great trial to himself) he laid it (among others) before Daniel.

It is observable how differently Nebuchadnezzar took this dream from that by which God had before visited him: he was then so angry with the wise men of Chaldea for not being able to explain the dream to him, that he was on the point of putting them all to death: this time he only sent quietly for Daniel, whose divine gift of interpretation he knew by experience; and when he perceived that Daniel was troubled, and unwilling to relate the vision to him, he kindly encouraged him, and bade him not fear to interpret it: to such an extent was his once cruel heart now softened and amended by what had already happened to him. And accordingly we may perceive, I think, that Daniel speaks to him with peculiar affection and interest: "My lord, the dream be to them that hate thee, and the interpretation to thine enemies:" and then having explained the aweful import of it, that as the tree, all but the stump, was cut down, so he should be driven from his kingdom, and from men, and his reason being gone, he should dwell with the beasts of the field,

should eat grass as oxen, and be wet with the dew of heaven: Daniel, I say, having explained this to Nebuchadnezzar, adds this loyal and affectionate advice: "Wherefore, O king, let my counsel be acceptable unto thee, and break off thy sins by righteousness, and thine iniquities by shewing mercy to the poor."

Still the great change, from pride to humility, remained to be wrought in Nebuchadnezzar. In the space of only twelve months, the remembrance of all these warnings and visions had so far passed away, that he began to congratulate himself on his own great doings, and to forget that it was God Who did all for him. His punishment came, as you have heard, immediately on him: he was driven in a moment from the top of earthly pride and enjoyment, to the most miserable and helpless condition in the whole world; a senseless person living with the beasts, and changed almost in his very body after the likeness of a beast.

So he continued, till Almighty God saw that he was ripe for recovery and conversion; and the moment his understanding returned to him, he lifted up his eyes to heaven, and blessed the Most High, and praised and honoured Him that liveth for ever; acknowledging at length unreservedly, that He, the Lord of Israel, is the only God: "His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom is from generation to generation, and all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing, and He doeth according to His will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of earth, and none can stay His hand, or say unto Him, What doest Thou?" And

being restored unto his kingdom, and to all his former glory, he still humbled himself before his Divine Chastiser; and thought it good to make his confession to all people, nations, and languages: teaching all to draw from it this great and saving lesson, "all His works are true, and His ways judgement: and those that walk in pride He is able to abase."

Such was the complete victory obtained by God's Almighty grace and providence over the spirit of the world and of Antichrist in the person of this great king: a kind of token of the future triumphs, which it has pleased Him, from age to age, to win in like manner for Himself and His Church, over the great ones of the earth; and particularly of that greatest triumph yet to come, when the kingdoms of this world are finally to become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ.

In particular, we might perhaps truly observe, that the four great monarchies, of which Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon was first, have all borne witness, in their way, to the overpowering majesty of God, and humbled themselves before His Church. How Nebuchadnezzar did so we have seen. And the Scriptures inform us of Cyrus, king of Persia, head of the next great monarchy after Nebuchadnezzar, that "God stirred up his spirit to acknowledge before all the world, that it was the Lord," the God of Israel, "Who had given him all the kingdoms of the earth;" in acknowledgment whereof he permitted and encouraged the return of the Jews from captivity, and the building of the Temple. "Who is there among you," says Cyrus, "of all God's people? his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem and build

the house of the Lord God of Israel (He is the God.)"

Here again we have a most remarkable confession on the part of the man, who for the time was head of the earthly or Antichristian kingdom, that he for one was converted in heart, and would not take part with God's enemies.

The third great empire was that of the Greeks, the head of which was Alexander the Great; but of him, except in prophecy, the Scriptures tell us nothing, he having lived in the times between the Old and the New Testament, during which the Holy Ghost, as to express Scripture, was silent. However, there is good reason to believe that Alexander too, warned in a dream, did solemnly acknowledge the true God at Jerusalem; though we have no proof whatever of such humble and devout allegiance on his part, as we find in Nebuchadnezzar and Cyrus.

But neither of these confessions is to be compared with that greatest outward triumph of the Church over the Antichristian kingdom, which took place when new Babylon, that is, Rome, became openly Christian, and threw off the yoke of her idols, after she had been drunken with the blood of the Saints and Martyrs for nearly three hundred years.

Nor yet, as we may reasonably conclude from Holy Scripture, is even that event worthy to be matched with the victory of the Church yet to come; when the great city Babylon shall be thrown down, and shall be found no more at all: when the wicked Antichristian power shall be consumed with the Spirit of our Lord's mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of His coming. But these are secrets of

the Most High yet to come, and it does not become us to pry curiously into them. It is enough for us to know in general, that the Church will triumph and the world perish; and being so assured, to take our part in every thing with the Church, and not with the world.

And let it be well understood, that these astonishing providences of old, these dealings of God with His people on a large scale, are in reality and substance the same as His dealings with each individual among us. A man need not be a Nebuchadnezzar, nor have great Babylon to glory in, in order to indulge pride and self-sufficiency of heart, and set himself up to be his own god. A poor labourer may be proud and irreligious, as well as a great king. When the notion of managing for ourselves takes entire possession of any of our minds; when we have prospered in a few things, and find that we have got a name for prudence and skill, and that other people are willing to be controlled by us; then it is that we are in danger of something like Nebuchadnezzar's feeling: if we be not very watchful, God will soon hear us saying to ourselves, "Is not this my house which I have built, my fortune which I have made, my plans which I have prospered in? Am I not entitled to praise and rest and enjoyment?"

Thrice happy is it for those, on whom the voice from heaven, the severe but merciful voice, shall fall in the midst of such profane self-congratulations, and convince them, even though it be by temporary loss of reason itself, how they are worse than nothing without their Creator.

God knows best in any case, what the right way

is of abating pride of heart; but as far as we can judge, no one would seem more effectual, than when men's wisdom and knowledge are taken away, their counsels turned into foolishness, and a perverse spirit, a spirit of infatuation, mingled with those thoughts and reasonings, in which they have been tempted to put their trust. Such things we most of us have seen, many of us have often in sight, any one of us may experience any hour.

May the Almighty in His mercy grant, that the sense of our own extreme frailty may keep us close to Him Who is the light of our souls, that Saviour, Who took to Him a human soul, that He might be our life, and the very light of that light of reason, which we are apt to value ourselves on! that come what may to any of us in this world, we may in the end "lift up our eyes," and finding ourselves in the Church, not in Babylon, may "praise and honour Him Who liveth for ever," and thank Him for abasing our pride!

SERMON XXVI.

OUR NEED OF PATIENCE.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. JOHN iv. 48.

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

"YE have need of patience," says the Apostle, "that when ye have done the will of God, ye may attain the promises." The great, the only work of a Christian man here in this present world, is to do God's will so truly, so earnestly, that he may not fail of obtaining God's promises in the holy and glorious world which is to come. And for so doing His will, we have especial need of patience. It cannot be done without patience, we must be patient, if we are ever to be good and happy.

Now, all must understand this doctrine the need of patience, as far as the afflictions of this world, outward and bodily troubles are concerned. They who know least about truth and goodness know that nobody can please God, who being in his senses does not at least endeavour to be patient under severe bodily pain, or want: even heathens, tolerably de-

cent ones, know as much as that: and those who know any thing about *Christian* goodness know also, that they will in the end prove none of Christ's, if they do not try in earnest to be patient under those trials which are far harder to bear than pain or want: the trouble of having their good name taken away, the trouble of being railed at, reviled, insulted, or of having those who belong to you ill-used. Yes, even in these troubles we have need of patience, and all Christians know it.

But there is a saying in the Gospel to-day, which when we come to consider it, carries on this doctrine of patience a good deal further, even into spiritual troubles, troubles of the soul and conscience, troubles and cares about our everlasting salvation. The saying which teaches this is that remarkable answer of our Lord to the nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. The poor man had come, as so many were used to do, to our Lord and Saviour, for help in extreme distress. He had heard, it seems, of that first miracle of turning water into wine, wrought at Cana, fifteen or twenty miles from Capernaum, and not knowing perhaps what to think or believe concerning Jesus, he nevertheless counted it worth his while to try what Jesus could do for him: as persons when a case is nearly hopeless will sometimes try remedies without any distinct faith in them. However, he came to Jesus, and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. What says our Saviour to him? He keeps him waiting for a while, tries his faith and patience, as He did that of the woman of Canaan, and of some other persons. But the manner of His

doing so, the words with which He seemed to put this nobleman off, are not a little remarkable. Instead of saying anything directly to the nobleman himself, our Lord makes as though He were addressing Himself to a number of persons; for His words are, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Somewhat in the same way as when He came down from being transfigured and a youth was brought to Him possessed with a dumb and deaf spirit, whom the Apostles had tried to cast out and could not, and the Scribes and Pharisees were disputing with them accordingly, our Lord seeming hardly to notice the father's distress, broke out into words of reproof: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" As those words were spoken not to the distressed father himself, who is even a pattern of true faith to us, crying out as he did, "[a]Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief;" but to the Scribes who were disputing around him: so it seems likely that the words spoken to this other anxious father, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe," were meant rather for the Capernaites and Jews in general, than for a check to the nobleman himself. For we see that presently afterwards on the man's simply repeating his prayer, "Sir, come down ere my child die," our Lord gave him the blessing of faith, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." And that this was the reward of the prayer of faith; we know by what follows next, "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." He had faith, and therefore his child was

[a] S. Mark ix. 24.

healed. But those of whom our Lord was speaking had not yet faith: they would not believe until they could see signs and wonders. They were a sample and specimen of the Jewish people generally: of whom S. Paul wrote long after, "the Jews require a sign:" whom also our Saviour rebukes many times for their unbelieving temper: sometimes saying, "this is an evil generation: they seek a sign, and no sign shall be given them, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:" at another time sighing deeply in His Spirit, and saying, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." Think on this, my brethren: what sort of a temper must that be, which could thus make the Son of God sigh deeply in His Spirit? who would not wish to search their own hearts thoroughly, if haply such an evil mind should be found lurking in them; in order that by His merciful aid they may make effectual war against it, and never rest, until it be entirely cured, and instead of causing their Saviour to sigh over them, they may be to Him nothing but joy in the presence of the angels of God?

Perhaps we may the better understand the mind of Christ in this respect, if we recollect how He had been engaged a very short time before. When the nobleman came to Him, He was just come back into Galilee, from which he had been absent several weeks or months. And in His way back passing through the country of Samaria, He held that wonderful conversation with the woman at Jacob's well: who believed in Him, not on account of any outward sign or wonder, for He wrought none at that place

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and time, but because, as she herself said, He told her all things that ever she did: that is He shewed by His manner of discoursing with her, that He knew the very secrets of her heart. Whereupon she believed Him when He told her that He was the Christ of Whom the old fathers had spoken, and mentioned Him to several persons of the city. They came to Him and asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days, after which they believed, not for any miracle that He wrought, but because of His word: "we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world."

These Samaritans then were content to believe without any sign or wonder: and when our Lord, coming back from them among His own countrymen the Galileans to Cana where He made the water wine, found Himself presently called upon for fresh miracles, and received, so far as He was received, only by those who had seen His miracles, it pleased Him to declare His Divine favour towards the more willing faith, and how He was displeased in comparison at that which was more scanty and grudging, by complaining as it were of His own countrymen. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," which of course those who knew what had passed in Samaria would understand to mean that the Samaritans were more approved in His sight, and all who like them should believe without any miracle. It was the same kind of comparison as He drew long after: "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Not that we are to imagine these Samaritans believing without any thought or consideration, any exercise of their reason, merely because they *felt* as if it were good for them to believe. Not so: they had the law of Moses and the prophecies contained in it in their hands: by that they knew there was to be a Christ, and by the tokens which the aweful Stranger gave that He knew what was in their hearts, they were satisfied that He was of God, and so believed Him, declaring that He was the Christ. That was in fact a great sign and wonder, I mean, His shewing them that He knew what was in their hearts: they did not believe without sufficient evidence, but the difference between them and the Jews was, that the Samaritans were ready to believe upon any sufficient evidence which God might vouchsafe, whereas the Jews made up their minds beforehand that such and such things must be done in their sight: they made themselves judges how the Almighty must deal with them; and if He did not take exactly the line which they had marked out for Him beforehand, they refused to believe that it was He. Why even when He *did* condescend to give them a sign, when He fed five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes, they were not ashamed, the very next day, to say to Him insolently, "What *sign* shewest Thou then, that we may see and believe Thee? What dost Thou work?" That is the way of unbelief, never to be satisfied: not even to try to be so, but still to go on demanding more and more: like the froward children of an indulgent and bountiful parent. They murmur first for bread, and when God gives them bread from

heaven, they require meat for their lust. But faith takes what God sends for the time; be it little or much, faith takes it thankfully, and makes the most of it.

Thus it is, I suppose, not seldom, in regard of the good things of this life. When losses or disappointments take place, when any thing vexatious or untoward happens, those who have neglected to pray for patience and practise it, grow fretful, and refuse to serve God, because they find they cannot have their own way. Like the unbelievers in the prophet Malachi: to whom God says, "Your words have been stout against Me: ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" And when you put them in mind of the better example of some good and upright man, who happens to be richer, more healthful or more prosperous than they, they will in their hearts make some such answer as satan made concerning God's faithful servant Job! "[c]Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." I wish we may be all free from the like miserable envious feeling towards those who seem more favoured than ourselves, but I much fear that it is no uncommon thing for those who are not so well off in the world to say to themselves, 'It is all very well

[c] Job i. 9-11.

for these our rich neighbours to be particular about serving God. He has favoured them, and they ought to serve Him: but it cannot be expected of such as I am: when I am as well off as they then I will serve Him: as it is, I have enough to do to fight my way through the world: it is out of the question, for me to be devout and serious.' I am sure you all see at once, how very profane this way of thinking is, though the temptation to it, I doubt not, is often hard to resist. Of course, there is no remedy for it but patience; patient persevering faith in Him Who made us what we are, appointed us our portion such as it is, gave His Son to die for us, and hath prepared a heaven for us at last.

This, we all understand well enough, how difficult soever some may find the practice of it. But we do not all understand how the same kind of temper may disturb and damage us even in respect of *spiritual* blessings: and yet if we consider, we may plainly see that it is so. Many even who have serious thought and in a way care for their own souls, are like the Jews of our Lord's time in this respect, that they will not let our Lord choose for them the best *method* of profiting their souls; they settle beforehand how it must be, and if it turn out differently from *that*, they are altogether put out and unsettled. Like Naaman the Syrian when he came to Elisha's door; he thought scorn to go and wash in the waters of Jordan, because he had made up his mind beforehand to be cured another way. He was wroth and went away and said, "Behold I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and smite his hand over

the place, and recover the leper." And because he was not to be cured in the particular way which he had fancied for himself, he refused at first to be cured at all, "he turned and went away in a rage:" though afterwards, by God's mercy, he thought better of it. Now I can fancy Christian people so far like Naaman, so far like the Jews of our Lord's time, as to turn aside from God's way of salvation because it does not answer to the notions they had formed beforehand: they thought they should see signs and wonders, and they do not see any, or at least, not the very signs which they had expected to see. E.g. we have heard, alas! of too many, who have been tempted to forsake their own mother, the Church of England, and go over to some other body of Christians, some to the Church of Rome, some to this or that sect of Protestants, committing thereby, we may hope not wilfully, but really, the sad and perilous sin of schism. Now I verily believe the true account of almost all these sad cases to be, men's imagining to themselves certain high perfections, which the true Church of God, they think, must have even here on earth, and because they find among us something very short of these perfections, they come to think sorrowfully of the Church of England itself, and are easily persuaded that the state of things is better elsewhere: whereas if they would look in the Bible they would find that no such perfection as they imagine was promised, but rather very much is said of a great falling off even among Christian people. Again, keen and eager persons, trying to walk in the way of godliness, are apt to reckon too confidently, not only on pardon and peace

at the last(which is promised them, if they persevere), but also on a happy and joyful *sense* of pardon, a comfortable transporting *assurance* of God's gracious favour: which is nowhere promised, but rather the contrary is signified. And if they have not this assurance, they are unhappy beyond *expression* and will hardly believe that God is good, and good to them. Except they see the sign and wonder of perfect peace in their hearts, they will not believe, they will not come near to Christ. Indeed, such are greatly to be pitied: but surely they are to be blamed also. They have need, like all the rest of us, of patience, and they are not yet seriously and constantly seeking it. Indeed they are greatly to be pitied, earnestly to be prayed for: and the one thing we must ask for them is patience. They are the sort of persons whom we more especially mean, when we request you, before the Litany, and also before Holy Communion, to pray for all who are in trouble and perplexity of mind. Let us all charitably pray for them. Let us beseech God to give to them and to us all such patience as dutiful children practise, when they see their parents ordering matters in a way very different from what they (the children) would expect. If they are *dutiful* children, they submit to all that, quietly: so let us submit to the dealings of our heavenly Father, both with the Church outwardly, and inwardly with our own souls. Let us make up our minds beforehand, that we are bad judges, that God knows better than we, that He will take care of the events of things, only let us take care of our duties. So not losing time and temper in vain imaginations, our hearts will be free

to look after the one thing needful, pleasing Him and doing His will.

If we had our own way, if the dreams we indulge in always came true, then we should be always doing, not Christ's will, but our own: and how then could we inherit the promises, which all depend on our taking up the Cross, denying ourselves, living by faith, not by sight? If we were always comfortable, there would be no practice for our faith. We must have some discomfort, to try us. What it shall be, and *how much*, we had better leave entirely to Him.

SERMON XXVII.

ALMIGHTY GOD FORGOTTEN IN PROSPERITY, SOUGHT IN ADVERSITY.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

HOSEA v. 15.

"In their affliction they will seek Me early."

WE heard in the Gospel this morning how a certain nobleman came to our Lord and prayed Him to come and heal his son, for he was at the point of death: and how our Lord seemed at first to make a difficulty, saying, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Why did our Lord seem to check the poor man, when all the while His purpose was to do what he desired of Him? We may believe that some part at least of His intention was to give a serious warning to all who should at any time be drawn to Him by affliction and trouble of any kind; to warn them, and all of us, how much better it would be if we drew near Him at once, without waiting till we are taught by bitter experience that we cannot help ourselves.

What the common course of men is we most of us know but too well. As long as we are tolerably

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the Most High yet to come, and it does not become us to pry curiously into them. It is enough for us to know in general, that the Church will triumph and the world perish; and being so assured, to take our part in every thing with the Church, and not with the world.

And let it be well understood, that these astonishing providences of old, these dealings of God with His people on a large scale, are in reality and substance the same as His dealings with each individual among us. A man need not be a Nebuchadnezzar, nor have great Babylon to glory in, in order to indulge pride and self-sufficiency of heart, and set himself up to be his own god. A poor labourer may be proud and irreligious, as well as a great king. When the notion of managing for ourselves takes entire possession of any of our minds; when we have prospered in a few things, and find that we have got a name for prudence and skill, and that other people are willing to be controlled by us; then it is that we are in danger of something like Nebuchadnezzar's feeling: if we be not very watchful, God will soon hear us saying to ourselves, "Is not this my house which I have built, my fortune which I have made, my plans which I have prospered in? Am I not entitled to praise and rest and enjoyment?"

Thrice happy is it for those, on whom the voice from heaven, the severe but merciful voice, shall fall in the midst of such profane self-congratulations, and convince them, even though it be by temporary loss of reason itself, how they are worse than nothing without their Creator.

God knows best in any case, what the right way

is of abating pride of heart; but as far as we can judge, no one would seem more effectual, than when men's wisdom and knowledge are taken away, their counsels turned into foolishness, and a perverse spirit, a spirit of infatuation, mingled with those thoughts and reasonings, in which they have been tempted to put their trust. Such things we most of us have seen, many of us have often in sight, any one of us may experience any hour.

May the Almighty in His mercy grant, that the sense of our own extreme frailty may keep us close to Him Who is the light of our souls, that Saviour, Who took to Him a human soul, that He might be our life, and the very light of that light of reason, which we are apt to value ourselves on! that come what may to any of us in this world, we may in the end "lift up our eyes," and finding ourselves in the Church, not in Babylon, may "praise and honour Him Who liveth for ever," and thank Him for abasing our pride!

SERMON XXVI.

OUR NEED OF PATIENCE.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. JOHN iv. 48.

"Then saith Jesus unto him, Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe."

"YE have need of patience," says the Apostle, "that when ye have done the will of God, ye may attain the promises." The great, the only work of a Christian man here in this present world, is to do God's will so truly, so earnestly, that he may not fail of obtaining God's promises in the holy and glorious world which is to come. And for so doing His will, we have especial need of patience. It cannot be done without patience, we must be patient, if we are ever to be good and happy.

Now, all must understand this doctrine the need of patience, as far as the afflictions of this world, outward and bodily troubles are concerned. They who know least about truth and goodness know that nobody can please God, who being in his senses does not at least endeavour to be patient under severe bodily pain, or want: even heathens, tolerably de-

cent ones, know as much as that: and those who know any thing about *Christian* goodness know also, that they will in the end prove none of Christ's, if they do not try in earnest to be patient under those trials which are far harder to bear than pain or want: the trouble of having their good name taken away, the trouble of being railed at, reviled, insulted, or of having those who belong to you ill-used. Yes, even in these troubles we have need of patience, and all Christians know it.

But there is a saying in the Gospel to-day, which when we come to consider it, carries on this doctrine of patience a good deal further, even into spiritual troubles, troubles of the soul and conscience, troubles and cares about our everlasting salvation. The saying which teaches this is that remarkable answer of our Lord to the nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. The poor man had come, as so many were used to do, to our Lord and Saviour, for help in extreme distress. He had heard, it seems, of that first miracle of turning water into wine, wrought at Cana, fifteen or twenty miles from Capernaum, and not knowing perhaps what to think or believe concerning Jesus, he nevertheless counted it worth his while to try what Jesus could do for him: as persons when a case is nearly hopeless will sometimes try remedies without any distinct faith in them. However, he came to Jesus, and besought Him that He would come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. What says our Saviour to him? He keeps him waiting for a while, tries his faith and patience, as He did that of the woman of Canaan, and of some other persons. But the manner of His

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doing so, the words with which He seemed to put this nobleman off, are not a little remarkable. Instead of saying anything directly to the nobleman himself, our Lord makes as though He were addressing Himself to a number of persons; for His words are, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Somewhat in the same way as when He came down from being transfigured and a youth was brought to Him possessed with a dumb and deaf spirit, whom the Apostles had tried to cast out and could not, and the Scribes and Pharisees were disputing with them accordingly, our Lord seeming hardly to notice the father's distress, broke out into words of reproof: "O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you?" As those words were spoken not to the distressed father himself, who is even a pattern of true faith to us, crying out as he did, "[a]Lord I believe, help Thou mine unbelief;" but to the Scribes who were disputing around him: so it seems likely that the words spoken to this other anxious father, "Except ye see signs and wonders ye will not believe," were meant rather for the Capernaites and Jews in general, than for a check to the nobleman himself. For we see that presently afterwards on the man's simply repeating his prayer, "Sir, come down ere my child die," our Lord gave him the blessing of faith, "Go thy way, thy son liveth." And that this was the reward of the prayer of faith; we know by what follows next, "The man believed the word that Jesus had spoken unto him, and he went his way." He had faith, and therefore his child was

[a] S. Mark ix. 24.

healed. But those of whom our Lord was speaking had not yet faith: they would not believe until they could see signs and wonders. They were a sample and specimen of the Jewish people generally: of whom S. Paul wrote long after, "the Jews require a sign:" whom also our Saviour rebukes many times for their unbelieving temper: sometimes saying, "this is an evil generation: they seek a sign, and no sign shall be given them, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:" at another time sighing deeply in His Spirit, and saying, "Why doth this generation seek after a sign? verily I say unto you, There shall no sign be given unto this generation." Think on this, my brethren: what sort of a temper must that be, which could thus make the Son of God sigh deeply in His Spirit? who would not wish to search their own hearts thoroughly, if haply such an evil mind should be found lurking in them; in order that by His merciful aid they may make effectual war against it, and never rest, until it be entirely cured, and instead of causing their Saviour to sigh over them, they may be to Him nothing but joy in the presence of the angels of God?

Perhaps we may the better understand the mind of Christ in this respect, if we recollect how He had been engaged a very short time before. When the nobleman came to Him, He was just come back into Galilee, from which he had been absent several weeks or months. And in His way back passing through the country of Samaria, He held that wonderful conversation with the woman at Jacob's well: who believed in Him, not on account of any outward sign or wonder, for He wrought none at that place

and time, but because, as she herself said, He told her all things that ever she did: that is He shewed by His manner of discoursing with her, that He knew the very secrets of her heart. Whereupon she believed Him when He told her that He was the Christ of Whom the old fathers had spoken, and mentioned Him to several persons of the city. They came to Him and asked Him to stay with them, and He stayed two days, after which they believed, not for any miracle that He wrought, but because of His word: "we have heard Him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ the Saviour of the world."

These Samaritans then were content to believe without any sign or wonder: and when our Lord, coming back from them among His own countrymen the Galileans to Cana where He made the water wine, found Himself presently called upon for fresh miracles, and received, so far as He was received, only by those who had seen His miracles, it pleased Him to declare His Divine favour towards the more willing faith, and how He was displeased in comparison at that which was more scanty and grudging, by complaining as it were of His own countrymen. "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe," which of course those who knew what had passed in Samaria would understand to mean that the Samaritans were more approved in His sight, and all who like them should believe without any miracle. It was the same kind of comparison as He drew long after: "Thomas, because thou hast seen Me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."

Not that we are to imagine these Samaritans believing without any thought or consideration, any exercise of their reason, merely because they *felt* as if it were good for them to believe. Not so: they had the law of Moses and the prophecies contained in it in their hands: by that they knew there was to be a Christ, and by the tokens which the aweful Stranger gave that He knew what was in their hearts, they were satisfied that He was of God, and so believed Him, declaring that He was the Christ. That was in fact a great sign and wonder, I mean, His shewing them that He knew what was in their hearts: they did not believe without sufficient evidence, but the difference between them and the Jews was, that the Samaritans were ready to believe upon any sufficient evidence which God might vouchsafe, whereas the Jews made up their minds beforehand that such and such things must be done in their sight: they made themselves judges how the Almighty must deal with them; and if He did not take exactly the line which they had marked out for Him beforehand, they refused to believe that it was He. Why even when He *did* condescend to give them a sign, when He fed five thousand of them with five loaves and two fishes, they were not ashamed, the very next day, to say to Him insolently, "What *sign* shewest Thou then, that we may see and believe Thee? What dost Thou work?" That is the way of unbelief, never to be satisfied: not even to try to be so, but still to go on demanding more and more: like the froward children of an indulgent and bountiful parent. They murmur first for bread, and when God gives them bread from

heaven, they require meat for their lust. But faith takes what God sends for the time; be it little or much, faith takes it thankfully, and makes the most of it.

Thus it is, I suppose, not seldom, in regard of the good things of this life. When losses or disappointments take place, when any thing vexatious or untoward happens, those who have neglected to pray for patience and practise it, grow fretful, and refuse to serve God, because they find they cannot have their own way. Like the unbelievers in the prophet Malachi: to whom God says, "Your words have been stout against Me: ye have said, It is vain to serve God: and what profit is it that we have kept His ordinances and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of hosts?" And when you put them in mind of the better example of some good and upright man, who happens to be richer, more healthful or more prosperous than they, they will in their hearts make some such answer as satan made concerning God's faithful servant Job! "[c]Doth Job fear God for nought? Hast not Thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath? Thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the land. But put forth Thine hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curse Thee to Thy face." I wish we may be all free from the like miserable envious feeling towards those who seem more favoured than ourselves, but I much fear that it is no uncommon thing for those who are not so well off in the world to say to themselves, 'It is all very well

[c] Job i. 9-11.

for these our rich neighbours to be particular about serving God. He has favoured them, and they ought to serve Him: but it cannot be expected of such as I am: when I am as well off as they then I will serve Him: as it is, I have enough to do to fight my way through the world: it is out of the question, for me to be devout and serious.' I am sure you all see at once, how very profane this way of thinking is, though the temptation to it, I doubt not, is often hard to resist. Of course, there is no remedy for it but patience; patient persevering faith in Him Who made us what we are, appointed us our portion such as it is, gave His Son to die for us, and hath prepared a heaven for us at last.

This, we all understand well enough, how difficult soever some may find the practice of it. But we do not all understand how the same kind of temper may disturb and damage us even in respect of *spiritual* blessings: and yet if we consider, we may plainly see that it is so. Many even who have serious thought and in a way care for their own souls, are like the Jews of our Lord's time in this respect, that they will not let our Lord choose for them the best *method* of profiting their souls; they settle beforehand how it must be, and if it turn out differently from *that*, they are altogether put out and unsettled. Like Naaman the Syrian when he came to Elisha's door; he thought scorn to go and wash in the waters of Jordan, because he had made up his mind beforehand to be cured another way. He was wroth and went away and said, "Behold I thought, he will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the Lord his God, and smite his hand over

the place, and recover the leper." And because he was not to be cured in the particular way which he had fancied for himself, he refused at first to be cured at all, "he turned and went away in a rage:" though afterwards, by God's mercy, he thought better of it. Now I can fancy Christian people so far like Naaman, so far like the Jews of our Lord's time, as to turn aside from God's way of salvation because it does not answer to the notions they had formed beforehand: they thought they should see signs and wonders, and they do not see any, or at least, not the very signs which they had expected to see. E.g. we have heard, alas! of too many, who have been tempted to forsake their own mother, the Church of England, and go over to some other body of Christians, some to the Church of Rome, some to this or that sect of Protestants, committing thereby, we may hope not wilfully, but really, the sad and perilous sin of schism. Now I verily believe the true account of almost all these sad cases to be, men's imagining to themselves certain high perfections, which the true Church of God, they think, must have even here on earth, and because they find among us something very short of these perfections, they come to think sorrowfully of the Church of England itself, and are easily persuaded that the state of things is better elsewhere: whereas if they would look in the Bible they would find that no such perfection as they imagine was promised, but rather very much is said of a great falling off even among Christian people. Again, keen and eager persons, trying to walk in the way of godliness, are apt to reckon too confidently, not only on pardon and peace

at the last(which is promised them, if they persevere), but also on a happy and joyful *sense* of pardon, a comfortable transporting *assurance* of God's gracious favour: which is nowhere promised, but rather the contrary is signified. And if they have not this assurance, they are unhappy beyond *expression* and will hardly believe that God is good, and good to them. Except they see the sign and wonder of perfect peace in their hearts, they will not believe, they will not come near to Christ. Indeed, such are greatly to be pitied: but surely they are to be blamed also. They have need, like all the rest of us, of patience, and they are not yet seriously and constantly seeking it. Indeed they are greatly to be pitied, earnestly to be prayed for: and the one thing we must ask for them is patience. They are the sort of persons whom we more especially mean, when we request you, before the Litany, and also before Holy Communion, to pray for all who are in trouble and perplexity of mind. Let us all charitably pray for them. Let us beseech God to give to them and to us all such patience as dutiful children practise, when they see their parents ordering matters in a way very different from what they (the children) would expect. If they are *dutiful* children, they submit to all that, quietly: so let us submit to the dealings of our heavenly Father, both with the Church outwardly, and inwardly with our own souls. Let us make up our minds beforehand, that we are bad judges, that God knows better than we, that He will take care of the events of things, only let us take care of our duties. So not losing time and temper in vain imaginations, our hearts will be free

to look after the one thing needful, pleasing Him and doing His will.

If we had our own way, if the dreams we indulge in always came true, then we should be always doing, not Christ's will, but our own: and how then could we inherit the promises, which all depend on our taking up the Cross, denying ourselves, living by faith, not by sight? If we were always comfortable, there would be no practice for our faith. We must have some discomfort, to try us. What it shall be, and *how much*, we had better leave entirely to Him.

SERMON XXVII.

ALMIGHTY GOD FORGOTTEN IN PROSPERITY, SOUGHT IN ADVERSITY.

TWENTY-FIRST SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

HOSEA v. 15.

"In their affliction they will seek Me early."

WE heard in the Gospel this morning how a certain nobleman came to our Lord and prayed Him to come and heal his son, for he was at the point of death: and how our Lord seemed at first to make a difficulty, saying, "Except ye see signs and wonders, ye will not believe." Why did our Lord seem to check the poor man, when all the while His purpose was to do what he desired of Him? We may believe that some part at least of His intention was to give a serious warning to all who should at any time be drawn to Him by affliction and trouble of any kind; to warn them, and all of us, how much better it would be if we drew near Him at once, without waiting till we are taught by bitter experience that we cannot help ourselves.

What the common course of men is we most of us know but too well. As long as we are tolerably

healthy and cheerful; as long as we are young and gay and high-spirited; we are sadly apt to go on pleasing ourselves and forgetting our Saviour. We know indeed at the bottom of our hearts, and should at once acknowledge if any one asked us, that in Him alone, after all, can we be truly happy; that it is very dangerous to keep at such a distance from Him. We know it, but we hardly ever think of it. Only bye and bye, when sickness comes or disappointment, when we are made, in spite of ourselves, to *feel* how utterly helpless we are, then we begin to think more in earnest of our duty towards God, to wish that we had served and loved Him more, to consider what we must do to be saved. Perhaps some of you may have noticed within this week or two an account of one portion of our army, just before the late fearful battle of the Alma, how that when they were within an hour's march of the enemy, the Chaplains suggested to the Commanding Officer, whether it might not be possible to halt for a few minutes and commend themselves to God by prayer: the word was accordingly given and the soldiers formed in three sides of a square, and joined for a short time, about seven or eight minutes, in an act of solemn devotion: many of them, we may well fear, being persons who would think but little of their prayers at ordinary times. But it was the near approach of danger which sobered them: they felt as it were one and all that for aught they could tell they were at the point of death; and so indeed hundreds of them were, for this was the very division which lost most men in that dreadful combat. Like the nobleman from Capernaum, they sought our Sa-

viour because death seemed so near at hand: and who knows what a blessing it may have brought on them? But who does not also feel how much better and happier it was in that aweful moment for those who were used to pray seriously than for those who had gone on thinking lightly of such duties. Or what if we were in a ship at sea, one moment cheerful and unalarmed as usual, and the next made aware of some fatal accident, leaving us almost without hope, but that in a few hours we should perish in the great deep (and this is no mere imagination, my brethren, but what really happened the other day to nearly three hundred of our fellow-creatures); what could we do in such a case for ourselves and those whom we best love? What but draw near to our only Saviour and beseech Him to be more than ever our Saviour? and then how sad for those who had seldom or never been used so to turn to Him! O, if we really believed and knew that we were at the point of death, how natural would it seem to say our prayers in earnest, to turn to our Lord with our whole heart! how little should we then heed what other people might remark on us, or whether we had a convenient place to pray in, or whether we had many or few or none to keep us in countenance, or whether we were not missing, by our devotions, something which might please or amuse us for the moment. All these things would be less than nothing to us, if we seriously apprehended (what really is always true) that death was very near at hand. When any thing convinces us of *that* (unless there be positive unbelief in the heart), all things change their look; our minds are taken up with perfectly different

thoughts; what seemed of the greatest consequence is turned into a mere trifle, and what seemed before dry and cold and unmeaning, a matter of form, which we had been taught but could not care about, now comes before us as a deep and terrible reality. The past, which we thought we had forgotten, which if any man reminded us of, we should perhaps be greatly affronted, comes before us; our trials, our warnings, our transgressions; we perceive how we have been trifling and taking liberties even at the very edge of the pit. Then as to the time to come: who can express the aweful thought, 'In a very few hours all will be over, all in this world, all that I have been used to, and accustomed to lean upon; and I, whither shall I go? in whose company shall I be found? what friends have I made in those everlasting habitations? how shall I be able to bear the All-searching Eye, which I shall then feel and know to be fixed upon me? and what if I should find myself on the wrong side of the great gulph fixed for ever? Alas! who shall live when God doeth this with his soul? and yet this is what He will do with my soul, in a very very short time: and what have I done to prepare myself for it? what trouble, what pains have I ever taken, how far have I put myself out of my own way, that I might in good time get used to the Countenance of our Saviour, and not have Him looking on me strangely and wrathfully when He shall appear to judge me?' Oh what a mere nothing, less than nothing, and vanity, will all the worldly objects then appear to us, on which we have been setting our hearts! and how shall we wish and long for power from above, to lay firm hold but for one hour

of that which we have hitherto confessed in words, but in heart cared little or nothing for, "Jesus Christ, and Him crucified."

It may be that some of us before now have had these feelings, or some of them, very near our hearts, when sickness and anguish have come upon us; in our own danger, and in our friends'. When we were ourselves brought down to death's door with pain and weakness, and our eyes failed with looking upwards: or when God seemed to be taking away the desire of our eyes with a stroke; wife, or child, or parent, or brother, or friend who was as our own soul, and we would have given our all to save them, and could not do any thing, could not part with any thing to the purpose: then we were deeply convinced, for the time, how frail and helpless we are; how great, how very near to us, the God with Whom we have to deal. Those were His signs and wonders, which we saw, and were even forced, for a while, to believe. Then it seemed to ourselves, perhaps to others, as if we could not help being devout and dutiful for the rest of our lives. But what is become of it all now? Alas! in too many cases it has proved but like a child's feeling, far indeed from true Christian repentance, a good beginning, if it had but gone on,. but vain, because we left it only a beginning. God in His mercy touches our hearts for the time, but we do not consider, we do not lay it to heart, when He takes off His heavy hand. We do not cherish the good feeling, and water it until it has taken root, and grown strong and hardy, no longer a mere feeling, but a good and steady principle. We do not watch and pray, that it may bear fruit: and so it

dies down of itself, and we go on outwardly as before. But inwardly in the sight of God and His holy Angels, we are not as before, but much worse. Satán has got a great advantage of us when he has prevailed on our foolish hearts to forget such special visitations; to go back to the wicked world from the immediate presence of God. The Old Testament is full of such instances. Indeed the whole history of the Jewish people is little else than a perpetual round of repenting in some sort when God visited them for their sins, and sinning again when He took off His hand. "[a] When He slew them, they sought Him: and they returned and enquired early after God. And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their Redeemer. Nevertheless they did but flatter Him with their mouth, and they lied unto Him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with Him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant." Or as it is in the prophet Hosea: God threatens, "I will go and return unto My place," i. e. I will withdraw Myself from them, and seem to take no care of them, until they acknowledge their offence, and seek My face: in their affliction they will seek Me early: "[b] Come," (say they) "and let us return unto the Lord: for He hath torn and He will heal us; He hath smitten and He will bind us up." What could be better? surely one would say, With *these*, affliction hath done its work: but listen to the words of expostulation which follow: "O Ephraim, what shall I do unto thee? O Judah, what shall I do unto thee? for your goodness is as the morning cloud, and as the early dew it goeth away." They

[a] Ps. lxxviii. 34—37. [b] Hosea vi. 1, 4.

were but as Ahab, who when he heard God's threatenings by Elijah humbled himself for a little while, "and put on sackcloth and went softly:" but when it came to practice—the only way of shewing that his repentance was in earnest—"he turned not from his evil way, but still did very abominably in following idols." In all such cases, as I said before, the relapsing sinner is not as before the hand of God touched him, but much worse. The Holy Spirit is vexed and grieved, the Evil one encouraged, and we become hard-hearted and reckless. He, in His mercy, tries us perhaps again, we repent and relapse again, and each time our spiritual condition is worse than the former: and there is more and more danger of His forsaking us entirely: as it is written of the impenitent Jews: "[c]I gave them up to their own hearts' lusts, and let them follow their own imaginations."

My brethren, do you think this a sad history? Are you ready to say in your hearts, God forbid it should be so with me, or with any of those whom I love? Then consider with yourselves, for indeed it is too true, that the very way to learn this evil lesson, and to harden ourselves against God's judgements, is to make the use which most of us are now making of His mercies. Is it not so, my brethren? Here you are all together in the House of God, spared, by His great mercy, the greater part of you from any pressing calamity or affliction for the present. You are well and heart-whole, you have the use of your limbs, God gives you the necessaries of life. If it were otherwise, if you were brought very low, you would very likely think of God, in earnest: it would

[c] Ps. lxxxi. 12.

be your chief care; if He were slaying you, you would seek Him: you would seek Him, and that early, i. e. rather than any thing else: night and day you would be taken up, so far as pain and care allowed you, in praying and repenting, and trying, if you could, to make your peace with Him before you died. But as it is, you do not think it necessary to lead that kind of life: it is enough for you, more I fear than many practise, to say a short prayer night and morning, with or without attending to what you say; to come to Church on Sundays, if all suit, and it does not put you out of your way: to break no more commandments, tell no more falsehoods, take no more dangerous liberties than the generality of persons of your own sort appear to you to do. This is for the present, your standard and rule of goodness: as for deep thoughts of God and your own soul, preparing yourself for death and judgement, following your Saviour, laying hold of the Cross, you put it all by at this time, it will be a convenient season for all such thoughts, you imagine, when you shall be ill or afflicted: then you hope to draw nearer to God, but for this time and all the time of health and outward comfort, it is enough for you to go on much as others do. Now, my brethren, if such be your mind; and I very much fear it is the mind of too many who ought to know a great deal better; what does it come to but just this—that because God is particularly merciful to you, and spares you many troubles which come often upon better people than yourselves, therefore it seems natural to you to be unthankful to Him, and think very little of Him. And yet, if you have any love for your parents, you would count

it a very intolerable thing to be careless about pleasing them and obeying their known wishes, because they are so kind and indulgent and have done and do for you so many more things than they need do. Do you not plainly see that such behaviour would only shew that you had no real love for your parents? and surely then you must see *as* plainly, that your present behaviour shews you to be without love towards God. And if you are not in the way to love God, what is to become of you? How can you ever be happy in heaven?

O why will you put things off, why will you delay turning to God, why will you so sin against Christ, so vex His Holy Spirit, when you know so well what the truth is, and what you will bye and bye wish you had done. You know far better than I can tell you (if you will but give yourself time to reflect on it), that a day is coming (it will very soon be here) in which you will wish with all your heart that you had not waited for old age or affliction before drawing nigh to your God: you will mourn over the remembrance of every hour which shall have been spent upon things merely of this world, much more upon sinful things. For you will *know*, then, and *see*, what now you only *say you believe*, that our Lord is very near you, very full of ways and merciful means for your good: that not only your own and your neighbours' afflictions, but your own ease also, and comfort, and what the world calls good luck, come directly from Him; He is the Author of them, and expects that we should acknowledge Him accordingly. He sends it all to draw us nearer to Him: pain and relief, affliction and joy, every thing

that happens is, one way or another, His token to each one specially; saying more touchingly than in words, 'I hold thee by thy right hand, and will never let thee go, if thou force me not to do so.'

Happy indeed and blessed are they who turn to their Saviour, truly turn to Him, in affliction and danger, accepting the punishment of their iniquity and loving Him the better for it, day by day, more and more humbly. But happier, surely, and *more* perfectly blessed, they who do not wait to be aged or afflicted, but turn to Him even as they are with their whole heart, beholding the marvellous strange wonders of His love. Better late than never; but best of all to begin at once. It is the only safe, the only loving way. O try it: make up your mind even now. Try and keep on trying. You cannot fail, for He has promised. He will teach you to love Him; and then you know, *all* things will work together for your good.

SERMON XXVIII.

A CHRISTIAN FAMILY.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. JOHN xi. 3.

"*Jesus loved Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus.*"

THE public services of the Prayer-book to-day lead us to think of God's Church and people, not as of so many scattered congregations, but as of one great and holy family. The collect more especially sets out upon this notion. 'Lord, we beseech Thee to keep Thy household the Church.' He is the great Master and Father of us all: He came down from heaven, to buy this Church, this company of Christians, with His own precious Blood: we are all His children, and He our Father: we are all His servants, and He is our Master: we are all His brethren, children of God by grace and by union with Him, and He is as it were our elder brother. For ourselves, then, and for all believers, we pray that we may be kept in continual godliness; that the Holy Spirit would as it were pitch His tent, make His abode among us, and keep us, as soldiers keep garrison in large towns, night and day. We beseech Him, that whoever else is in the house, He would be there to keep it from all adversities, and to guide

all who abide there in the right way: that their day's employment may constantly be, serving their Lord in good works, with a devout and affectionate heart. Again, in the epistle S. Paul writes to the Philippians as a loving father to a dutiful and good family; longing greatly after them all: praying with a kind of tender jealousy that all their good things may be done in the best possible way: that their "love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement: that they may approve things that are excellent, that they may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ:" All which are the very wishes which a parent, being absent for a time, would naturally feel in his heart for those whom he had left at home.

Again, the Gospel for to-day is the parable of the unmerciful servant where our Lord and His Angels, and we sinful men, are represented all as one family together. All these instructions of Holy Scripture come to one and the same thing, namely, that God's people are a great and a holy family; and would be a happy family, if they would but keep to those rules which make families on earth peaceable and contented.

Now so it is, that the second lesson also this morning sets before us a holy family: for next to that household which especially goes by that name; next to the holiest family of all, where shall we find a house or family more deserving the name of holy, than that of which S. John has to-day been telling us? Next to Bethlehem, where should we go but to Bethany: next to Jesus Himself, and Mary, and Joseph, whom should we desire to see and make

much of, rather than Martha and Mary and Lazarus? Thus, if one were to mention any special subject, as set before us by our mother the Church to be meditated on this day, that subject would perhaps be family religion: how the Church and kingdom of God is all together one holy family: and how every holy family is on a small scale a Church and kingdom to our God. And more particularly we seem to be taught what it is which makes a family holy and happy, and what sort of persons we may expect to find in it. This is the point which we have especially to consider to-day.

"Jesus loved Martha, and her sister and Lazarus." Think what it is to be loved by Jesus: to be loved by Him with especial, distinguishing love; such love as that which He shewed toward His beloved disciple, who lay in His Bosom. He loves indeed all men, and all things: He made all, and hateth nothing which He hath made: His tender mercies are over all His works. But still there are some places and some persons over which His eyes are said to be especially open: as we read in Proverbs, "The eyes of the Lord are in every place;" and yet in king Solomon's prayer at the consecration of the Temple, intercession is made, "that Thine eyes may be open towards this place day and night." And as with places, so it is with persons: "the Lord is loving unto every man:" yet Abraham and those like him are peculiarly entitled the friends of God: Jesus is kind both to the evil and to the good, yet there are some, and those not many, of whom the Gospel tells us especially, that He loved them. Now then consider a little with yourselves, what a thing it must be to be

thus loved, to be loved with especial, more than ordinary love, by Him Who is the Fountain of all Love, the Son of God, and Saviour of the world. From Him (as a holy man has said) all love, all pity flows: mothers are kind, because He is so, and causes them to be so. If then it is delightful to be the object of a mother's love, to know that a good and tender heart is yearning always to do you good, and to pour itself out in love and affection towards you; what joy, what unspeakable sweetness must it be to be loved by Jesus Christ with that distinguishing love, which the Scripture means when it says that He "loved Martha and Mary and Lazarus." What a blessing must it bring, sooner or later (for they, may not perhaps always know it at the time) when the Almighty all-Merciful Eye rests on any dwelling-house of men with peculiar favour. Who would not long to be born in that house? to live there, and most of all to die there? Were any person remarkable for wisdom and holiness and the practice of good works to say what he thought of the various families around him, and to choose out one, with whom he might most worthily abide, would not all persons feel a deep interest in his choice? Would not all well-meaning persons look earnestly and long, to see what it was in that particular house, which drew his favour to it more than any of the rest? How much more, if on entering into a village we could discern in which of all the tenements our Lord Christ is more immediately dwelling by His grace! And if you had been in Bethany at the time S. John writes of, you might have known this. Those who were aware might have pointed out to you the dwelling of Laza-

rus, and might have said, 'There is the place: that one is the holy household, favoured above all others in our town. There Jesus lodges when He comes up to Jerusalem: there He retires to refresh Himself after His wearisome watchings in the Mount of Olives, and more wearisome endurance of the contradiction of the Scribes and Pharisees in the Temple: that is for the time His home, and those are the persons with whom He loves to be.' Surely, had the house been so pointed out to us, we should have asked, What sort of persons are they, who live in that highly favoured place? We should have asked, and have listened with all our ears for the answer.

The answer is, "Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus." As the first and holiest household consisted of a Virgin Mother and her Son, and of the guardian of them both, so this second was made up of a brother and two sisters: to shew us perhaps, that the foundations of Christian charity must be laid deep in brotherly love: even as the gathering of the twelve Apostles, the commencement of the great universal flock, itself commenced with the choice of two pair of brothers: "Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother." Whatever else, then, there may or may not be in the house which Jesus loves, one thing we are sure must be there: namely, brotherly charity. Where brethren dwell together in unity, there especially the Lord promises His blessing.

Next, consider what sort of persons these two sisters and their brother were, so far as the Gospel gives us any account of them. Martha the elder sister (as it seems), is set before us the pattern of a diligent,

thoughtful, charitable person, serving God faithfully in the works of her outward calling. Mary her sister, is a pattern for those who long to be devout in retirement: to spend all their money upon our Lord, and all their time with Him: as she poured the expensive ointment on our Lord's Head, and sat at His Feet, and heard His Word, while her sister was busy and cumbered with much serving. And even in their hour of affliction, when their brother Lazarus was dead, Mary went on sitting still in the house, and did not go out to meet our Lord till He summoned her: but Martha hastened at once to meet Jesus, as He was in the way. Thus is Mary the pattern of a thoughtful and devout, Martha of a thoughtful and active person: and their brother Lazarus, he represents to us those for whom, we are quite sure, Christ is especially concerned in every family, namely the afflicted and sick. When He was on earth, as often as He came to any place, the afflicted were the first to be noticed by Him, "Whithersoever He entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they brought unto Him them that were sick with divers diseases and torments, and besought Him that He would lay His Hands on them: and there went virtue out of Him, and healed them all." He never for a moment forgets those on whom He has laid His chastening Hand; whom He has caused in any way to partake of His Cross. Be quite sure of it, my brethren: where sickness and trouble are in a Christian house, there is Christ in a way of special grace. "[a]Tribulation worketh patience; and patience, experience; and experience, hope; and hope maketh not ashamed,

[a] Rom. v. 3, 4, 5.

because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost which is given unto us." Christ had long before loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, but the great manifestation of His love was, when he whom He loved had been sick and died.

Here then we see what the qualities are which draw down God's especial blessing on a Christian family: who the sort of persons whom Jesus loves, and in whose houses He is accustomed to abide. They are such as Martha, industrious, useful, prudent, joined with such as Mary, devout, thoughtful, affectionate, in such sort that neither is Martha swallowed up with family cares, but is still free to wait on God and His poor, neither yet is Mary withdrawn from affectionately caring for others, but is ready to go out of doors when Jesus summons her, as well as to sit at His Feet, still in the house. And again the blessing of His Presence is mysteriously sweetened and enhanced where there is a Lazarus, a sick friend of Christ and His saints to be waited on, thought of, cared for: I know not how it is, but in the silence of a sick room, when persons are watching and nursing, our Lord seems to make Himself present in a peculiarly sweet and gracious way, not so well known even to His faithful ones in their days of high health and outward prosperity. And where these three are, suffering, devotion, dutiful charity, there be sure is our merciful Lord Jesus with all His good gifts and graces, preparing souls to be saints in Heaven. Thither He will hasten as soon as He is called in prayer: or if He seem to delay (as He did when sent for to Bethany) it is only that the blessing when it comes, may prove the greater: there

He will openly declare His glorious promises: there He will work His miracles, raising dead souls, in answer to devout prayers: as He called Lazarus out of his grave where he had lain four days, in pity to the dutiful Martha and the devout Mary. Where these three are, dutifulness, devotion, patient suffering, there will be all the other tokens which mark the Presence of Jesus in a Christian house: there will be concord: all will agree to serve Him and to help one another: and the sweet fragrance of that brotherly unity will spread itself all around in honour of Him Who gives the grace, like the precious ointment poured upon Aaron's head, and coming down to the skirts of his clothing: all the youngest and lowest and most insignificant members of the family will have the benefit and blessing of it: all will be one in Christ.

Again, such a Christian house will be the home of Christian usefulness and regularity: each one will know his place, and will keep to it, for the love of his good Master, who set him in it. There will be good rules, and they will be observed, each one giving up his own selfish will, to please Christ, Who gave up all: neither time nor money, food, clothing, nor furniture will be wasted, because all will know that account must be rendered of all. There will be deep self-denying affection, each one heartily endeavouring, all day long, to prefer others to himself, both in honour, in profit, and in pleasure; there will be such love that it would seem as if they could not live without one another, yet such resignation and contentment, that all will be willing to part when it pleases God, all patient and hopeful when any are taken away. In such a house there will be diligent

prayer, daily self-examination, exact confession, cheerful almsgiving, seasonable silence, discourse well-ordered, temperate meals, quiet and discreet fasting. But these things cannot be, where either Martha or Mary or Lazarus, devotion, dutifulness or patience, is wanting. If it is Martha only, she will be cumbered about much serving: the world, the outward part, will insensibly encroach on religion: if Mary only, there will be danger of prayer and meditation degenerating into something dreamy and unreal: and in most families need is found, sooner or later, of a Lazarus, a patient sufferer, to help the rest to realize the Presence of Jesus: to bear the cross before them, and prepare them to bear it themselves. Especially when there is need of penitence—as in what house is there not more or less need of it—who can tell how great, how providential the blessing, of having to wait on some one whom Jesus loveth in sickness or in trouble? Surely it is one of the Almighty Father's most gracious ways of recovering His prodigal children, to chasten them by the sickness or trouble of some one better than themselves, whom they dearly love, and for whose sake they presently begin to wish that they themselves were fitter to pray.

Thus in all repects a Christian family, made up of such as Jesus loves, will be a true type and emblem of the whole Church: even as that Church itself is a type of heaven. And may Almighty God grant to each one of us, for the short time we live here, a portion in such a blessed home: or such grace to supply the want of it, as may bring us to our true home at last.

SERMON XXIX.

PAST MERCIES, A PLEDGE OF MERCIES TO COME.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

PHILIP. i. 6.

"Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

THOSE whom the grace and good providence of God has led to think at all of their own spiritual condition, are generally very earnest in seeking out "comfortable texts," passages of Scripture which fill them with pleasant hopes of God's forgiveness and favour towards them. It should seem as if this epistle to the Philippians were written in part with express purpose of meeting this our natural desire, and supplying comfort to sick souls. It is an epistle full of consolation from beginning to end; yet full of warning and instruction too. It is full of consolation, as might be expected from an epistle to that Church, which of all to whom S. Paul wrote, appears to have received the Gospel the most faithfully and affectionately from the very first. The epistle is also full of warning and instruction, as being written

in evil times; times when, besides their own natural corruption, Christians were on every side beset with especial snares and perils. Both comfort and warning may be drawn largely from this, the very first sentence of the epistle: the comfort is plainly spoken out; the warning is not darkly hinted.

"I thank my God," says the Apostle, "upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, for your fellowship in the Gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." He does not know how to say enough of the joy he had in thinking of them; of the earnest welcome they gave to the Gospel at first, and of their steadiness, continuing still to profess it, for all the persecution and tribulation they had to endure. How the Philippians first received the Gospel, we know from the sixteenth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles. It began from the house of a woman named Lydia, whose heart the Lord opened first of all to attend to those things that were spoken of Paul. But after a short time, the multitude rose up against him: he was beaten and imprisoned, with much shame, but God opened the prison doors by an earthquake, and the heathen jailor being converted and baptized, and the heathen magistrates alarmed, the Apostle was, for that time, allowed to depart free and safe. Thus the Philippians "received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost." And as they received it, so they kept it, rejoicing to communicate with the Apostle, both in his bonds and in his poverty. These

were the men to whom the Apostle was speaking, when he said, he was "confident of this, that He which had begun a good work in them would perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." The comfort and encouragement of these words is quite plain, as I said before: to be praised so earnestly by such a man as S. Paul, speaking by the Holy Spirit of God, and to have him express such strong hopes of their continual improvement and final salvation, must have been as comfortable, as encouraging, as any words they could hear in this world.

But if they duly considered the words, they must have perceived them to be words of warning also. For, first of all, after all they had done, the Apostle gives them to understand, that he considered them as only having made a beginning. Yet they had done what most men would consider as very great things indeed. They had clung to S. Paul, or rather to his Master, through several years of shame and danger, and had been more earnest and forward than any other Church in contributing to supply his necessities. Should the like trying times occur again, which of us all would not praise himself, and think he had done great things, if he came any where near their exertions? Yet, behold, their exertions were but a *beginning*.

Another point of warning hinted in the words of the text is this: that the whole credit of the good work wrought in the Philippians is ascribed by S. Paul to God Almighty, none of it to themselves. He which hath begun a good work in you, He, and no other, I trust, will perform it. Plainly, he wished them to be thoroughly aware, how very dangerous

and destructive it would be, should they once begin to value themselves on their own growth in grace, and count it their own work, and not the work of Him Who alone can sanctify souls. The tone of the whole verse is as if he had said, 'I see in you a good and hopeful beginning, such a beginning as fills me with joyful expectation; but remember, I beseech you, that it is but a beginning, and remember, too, that it is not your's, but God's. For on your bearing these things in mind will depend the fulfilment of the good work; your perfection and glorification in the day of Jesus Christ.'

The lesson which this verse especially seems to hold out to all Christians is this: that it should be our comfort, as it is our duty, to consider the past favours of God Almighty as so many pledges for the future, so many tokens of His kind intentions towards us.

S. Paul was confident, that the good work of God, in those his beloved Philippian converts, would be performed, that is, carried on to end in glory, in the day when all works shall have an end. Why was S. Paul confident of this? Besides other reasons which he might have, this very thing made him confident; namely, that God had begun to work in them. S. Paul felt thus with regard to the Philippians; and why should not all Christians feel the same, in respect of themselves, and of their brethren, in whom they see or feel the mercies of God? Why should we stand loitering and lingering, accounting this duty too hard, that temptation too strong, such a commandment too high and spiritual, such an example too perfect to be followed? Why should we

not, one and all, thank God, and take courage, both in respect of ourselves and others, recollecting what reason we have to be sure of God's gracious mind and purpose?

The ground of such thankful confidence must be, that all improvement, all spiritual blessings, come of God, and not of ourselves. For every man may judge, if he will, by every day's sad experience, how vain it would be to trust in himself. If your growth in grace, such as it is, were your own work, you would indeed have little reason to hope for any long continuance of it. For you know how frail your own works are, how unsteady your good resolutions, how soon, when you are left to yourself, you allow your good habits to wear away, and evil ones to get the dominion over you. Every one who watches his own heart at all must know enough of this, from continual experience, to hinder him from having the least confidence in any good beginnings of his own.

But now we know that we are not in our own hands, but in His hands, Who never can change, Who is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. "God is not as man, that He should lie, nor as the son of man, that He should repent. Hath He said, and shall He not do it? or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" We are sure, then, that when He begins, He will also make an end; His power cannot fail, nor His will contradict itself: when, therefore, in His power and mercy He has plainly begun to work men's spiritual good, we have all the reason we can have in this world to hope the very best for them; all the reason in the world to take courage in doing them all the good we can.

For example: when by the providence of God a child is born in a Christian country, it is a sign that God would have him baptized, and new-born in the Church of Christ. When he is baptized, that is a token that God means him all the blessings of the Gospel. Nobody need despair of him, nor think his pains thrown away in labouring to teach or correct that child, to restrain him in evil or encourage him in good. Child or man, how froward soever he may be, he is one whom our Lord has sealed for His own, so far as to reckon him one of His own chosen people and Church on earth; nay, more, He has made him a member of Himself: and this surely is sign enough of God's gracious purpose towards him, and reason enough for all who love Christ to hope against hope in endeavouring to bring him to God.

Again: our Saviour has trusted His Church with the seal of Confirmation also, for a further token of His having begun and still continuing, in each of her faithful children, the work of their spiritual improvement. The Spirit which is given to believing and obedient souls, by laying on of the Bishop's hands, is the Spirit of ghostly strength, of Christian knowledge, and of the fear of the Lord. And whenever, at any future time, a cloud comes over your mind, and you are inclined to doubt whether, towards *you*, God has not forgotten to be gracious, (I speak now to those only who have been, by God's providence, duly confirmed,) let me beseech you, in those dark and dispiriting thoughts, to turn your minds to that moment when the hand of God's chosen servant was stretched out over you, to bless you in His Name; and the prayer pronounced, that you might

continue His for ever. Be sure, it was a special token of His mercy: of His mercy who cannot change. Accept it as such, and make it a reason for cheerful hope, and watchful, humble obedience. Whatever your backslidings have since been, your having been confirmed by laying on of the Bishop's hands is one token of God's pardon and grace to you, the moment you turn to Him in true repentance. Without repentance, I do not deny that the same Confirmation makes your case worse; as do all the means of grace, abused. But still on God's part the saying holds true, and nothing but our own sloth or wickedness can baffle it; that the good work, begun in Baptism and Confirmation, must be taken as a pledge of mercy and salvation at last.

Now what has been said of Confirmation, is still in a higher degree true concerning the holy Supper of the Lord: of which it is clearly His blessed will, that all who have been confirmed should speedily become worthy partakers. Such as duly receive those Holy Mysteries are instructed by the Church "most heartily to thank God, for vouchsafing to feed them with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of His Son our Saviour, and for assuring us thereby of His favour and goodness towards us, and that we are in truth members united to the spiritual Body of His Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs through hope of His everlasting Kingdom, through the merits of the most precious Death and Passion of His dear Son." And in humble confidence they are further instructed to pray, that our heavenly Father, Who has given us such a mark of His favour, would

go on to "assist us with His grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as He has prepared for us to walk in."

I have repeated to you almost the whole of this Collect, shewing you most exactly the meaning of the Apostle, when he teaches you to regard the past mercies of the Almighty as pledges of further mercies to come. The Holy Communion, the greatest of those mercies on earth, because it is what brings you nearest to our blessed Saviour, is also the most distinct pledge of continued and increasing mercies to come. Because God has just given us the very Body and Blood of His Son, therefore we come boldly to the throne of grace, asking for help to do those good works which He has prepared for us to walk in.

Thus you see how the means of grace, offered, one after another, to Christian people in the Church of God, ought to serve as so many reasons for depending on Him for more and more grace: so many fearful condemnations to those who go back, or do not go forward. And this holds true of every person, whether he chooses to attend to God's offers, and employ His means of grace, or no. It is still equally true, surely, that our blessed Lord means you mercy every time He invites you to His holy Table; every time He causes you to be reminded of your Baptism, which you very likely have all but forgotten, or of Confirmation, which you may probably have slighted or profaned. These are, all of them, His gracious beginnings; and where they are, you may be quite certain He is waiting to do you good, the moment you will turn to Him. His mind is towards you, as it was towards His ancient people; to whom His

words were such as these: "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

The means of grace, such as I have now mentioned, are common to the whole Church. But let us consider a case of a more private and personal kind, between God and each man's own conscience. Let us suppose any one, after years, it may be, of carelessness and irreligion, touched with some feelings of his sins, some thought of his spiritual condition. Every such thought and feeling, depend on it, is a sure sign that God intends that man to repent in earnest. If you let such misgivings pass unimproved and hurry back again like a dog to his vomit, do not think you are just where you were. No: you are in a much worse condition, God has knocked again at the door of your heart, and you have again refused to open, and let Him in to dwell there. On the other hand, if by His grace you really open your ear to instruction, then you have this blessed assurance, that the very first scruple thus arising in you is a proof that God has not cast you off: you may be forgiven and saved; only lose no time, lest this mercy too be thrown away.

And when you have once begun, really and steadily, to mind the great work of your salvation, when you find yourself in good truth more earnest and fervent in prayer, more awake and alive to the presence of Almighty God, more concerned to please your Saviour in all things, then you may humbly consider, that every hour of real improvement is a fresh sign of His gracious purpose towards you: thus

you may quiet any misgivings, which either sloth or discontent, or (as sometimes happens) bodily infirmity may at times excite within you. Only be very much on your guard against anything like praising yourself. Remember the Pharisee in the parable: a good work had begun in him; for punctual payment of God's dues, and fasting to keep himself in order, were surely, so far, good things: but he threw all the good of them away, he turned them into occasions of evil, by trusting in them, and valuing himself upon them. Never forget, that this snare is laid for you. When Satan cannot prevent good beginnings, his next point is, to get you to praise yourself for them; not always to praise yourself in words, but often, what is still more dangerous, to *think* over your own praise silently. This is a deep and most enticing art; and those who know, by their own conscience, that they are apt to be led away by it, and to sit musing on their own good deeds, have as much need as any sinner in the world to watch and pray without ceasing.

However, thus much is certain: that nothing *besides* amendment in practice, purer and holier thoughts, words and actions, nothing short of this can be safely depended on as a token of men's final salvation. As far as we dare to judge of it all, we must judge of it by that rule, and by no other: not by our much *knowledge* of divine words, no, nor of divine things either; nor yet by our quick and strong feelings, when we read or hear of the sufferings of our Saviour, or other affecting parts of Holy Scripture; much less are you to judge yourself in a state of grace, because you have *more* knowledge, or

more good feeling, than many or most of your acquaintance. These are, indeed, broken reeds to lean on, without good practice to follow them, good practice persevering to the end.

And observe, I mean by good *practice*, not what the world means, only or chiefly, doing your duty to your neighbour, but I mean especially, doing your duty to your Saviour: trying to live by faith in His Cross, to please Him in all things, for He died for you. *These* things will bring a man peace at the last; as for high knowledge and quick feelings, and thankful recollections of mercies received in times past, they are all good as beginnings: but if not followed up, they may, and will, be lost.

Who ever knew more of the truth, or felt divine things more deeply, or had more Christian good works to look back on, than had the great Apostle S. Paul? But he never durst look back; he counted not himself to have obtained; he kept himself in order, body and soul, lest, having preached to others, he himself should be a castaway.

'Are we, then, never to be certain? never to be assured of our final salvation?' We know of no promise that we shall be so here in this present world. But we do know that we are commanded, as long as we are in this world, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling: we do know, that the great Owner of the world begun by His Spirit a good work in us, when He called us to be Christians, and has given us many tokens since, that He will perform that work unto the end, if our sin and unbelief drive Him not away. This we do know for certain; and therefore we may be sure that it is wisest and best,

making no question of God's merciful purpose, to judge ourselves strictly by His plain commands, and in deep humiliation for our past unworthiness, and strict purposes of future improvement, to submit ourselves to His good Spirit, for such measures of comfort and assurance as He knows to be best for us. As long as we choose for ourselves, we are in danger; but when we can once, truly and heartily, leave Him to choose for us, then it will be well with us, and then we shall be safe.

SERMON XXX.

UNRESERVEDNESS IN SERVING GOD.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. MATTHEW xviii. 31.

"Peter said unto Jesus, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven."

THOUGHTFUL readers or hearers of the Gospel may observe here, as in many other places, the sort of questions which S. Peter especially was accustomed to ask of our Saviour—what one may call *childlike* questions: answering exactly to the enquiries which little children are apt to make of their elders, when any thing has happened to make them more serious than ordinary, and turn their hearts more earnestly towards Divine things. Often at such times they cannot contain themselves, but come out with questions and remarks, in themselves most simple and natural, yet too high and deep for any but those who are taught of God to answer: and their questions and remarks almost always refer directly to themselves, their own duties, their own troubles, their own

feelings, their own privileges. Grown people are more reserved; but children, to those whom they can trust, speak out with entire faith and trust, and are not ashamed to signify how little they know; nor are they afraid to profess what is in their heart at the time, whereas grown people often keep it back, for this among other reasons, that they know by experience how soon it may pass away. S. Peter, I say, was like a simple-hearted child, in his way of remonstrating with our Saviour: "Master, the multitude throng Thee, and press Thee, and sayest Thou, Who touched me?" And when He foretold His death, Peter as an affectionate child began to rebuke Him: "Be it far from Thee, Lord: this shall not be unto Thee." Peter was for making three tabernacles, and staying in the Mount of Transfiguration. Peter was so eager to come to Christ on the water; yet presently, when he saw the wind boisterous was afraid. Peter was foremost, as in making the good confession, "Thou art the *Christ* the Son of the Living God," so in asking what his reward should be: "We have left all and followed Thee; what shall we have therefore?" Peter, like a forward child, took upon him to promise that his Master should pay tribute, though he could only guess without knowing it: like a dutiful and loving child, he could not bear for his Master to wash his feet. And how childlike all his behaviour was in the whole matter of his denial, and all through our Lord's Passion, every one knows, who knows that history at all.

This being so, it was perfectly natural that when mention had been made of a man's brother trespassing against him, S. Peter should be the one among

the disciples to ask such a question as that in the text, 'How often are we to forgive?' for it is just the thought which might arise in a religious childlike mind. 'What should one do in such and such a case? How far is such and such a duty to be carried?' This is a kind of matter, which earnest young people are very apt to be discussing among themselves: and the *most* childlike will be the one to come to speak of it to his elders. Accordingly S. Peter comes to our Lord and asks Him, "How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times?" And our Lord takes occasion from his asking to teach both him and us that most joyful and comfortable yet grave and aweful lesson, that He is ready to forgive all, if we will but be ready to forgive those who have offended us.

I do not however intend now to enlarge on the special duty of forgiving, which however hard to practise, is easy enough to understand, and of which our Lord reminds us every time we say a prayer; causing us to say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." I am not now going to speak of this duty of forgiving in particular, but rather of the way which we are apt to get into in respect of all duties in general, setting bounds to them, and making out that they do not reach to this or that case. This is done by some people in their simplicity and imperfection, by others in a false, self-pleasing, hypocritical way: they try somehow to make a bargain with God, and to get off and save their souls at last, with the least possible sacrifice and cost to themselves. S. Peter, as I said, is an instance of the first sort, asking as a child might,

how many times a person might trespass against another, and yet that other be bound to forgive. The Pharisees are an instance of the other sort, in their unfair and presumptuous ways of dealing with so many of the commandments: making out for instance, that people might hate their enemies, because Moses said only, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour." It is plain, I say, that this question of S. Peter's might be asked by a person in either of these two senses, either by a simple disciple like S. Peter himself, meaning no harm, but not well putting together the truths which he had learned: or by a malicious, unforgiving, ill-tempered person, devising to find an excuse for the indulgence of his evil unkind spirit. Either way our Lord has vouchsafed to give us a complete answer to the question. If any man fear, that to go on forgiving whatever wrong one has received is too much to ask, too hard, absolutely impossible: our Saviour here tells him plainly that it is not too hard, it is our absolute duty, it is quite possible: else He would not have commanded it. If any man be inclined to say, How can it be right to go on forgiving all the bad things that are done? is it not too great an encouragement to sinners? behold here is the Judge of all the earth, declaring it to be His Will, that we should forgive from our hearts, forgive every thing, forgive even when it is our duty to punish: this He declares to be so entirely His Will, that without it we are sure to be delivered to the tormentors for ever. These are our Lord's answers to the childish and ignorant inquirer. But if there be any person who wanting to be forgiven himself, wanting to keep his Christian privileges,

continue His for ever. Be sure, it was a special token of His mercy: of His mercy who cannot change. Accept it as such, and make it a reason for cheerful hope, and watchful, humble obedience. Whatever your backslidings have since been, your having been confirmed by laying on of the Bishop's hands is one token of God's pardon and grace to you, the moment you turn to Him in true repentance. Without repentance, I do not deny that the same Confirmation makes your case worse; as do all the means of grace, abused. But still on God's part the saying holds true, and nothing but our own sloth or wickedness can baffle it; that the good work, begun in Baptism and Confirmation, must be taken as a pledge of mercy and salvation at last.

Now what has been said of Confirmation, is still in a higher degree true concerning the holy Supper of the Lord: of which it is clearly His blessed will, that all who have been confirmed should speedily become worthy partakers. Such as duly receive those Holy Mysteries are instructed by the Church "most heartily to thank God, for vouchsafing to feed them with the spiritual food of the most precious Body and Blood of His Son our Saviour, and for assuring us thereby of His favour and goodness towards us, and that we are in truth members united to the spiritual Body of His Son, which is the blessed company of all faithful people; and are also heirs through hope of His everlasting Kingdom, through the merits of the most precious Death and Passion of His dear Son." And in humble confidence they are further instructed to pray, that our heavenly Father, Who has given us such a mark of His favour, would

go on to "assist us with His grace, that we may continue in that holy fellowship, and do all such good works as He has prepared for us to walk in."

I have repeated to you almost the whole of this Collect, shewing you most exactly the meaning of the Apostle, when he teaches you to regard the past mercies of the Almighty as pledges of further mercies to come. The Holy Communion, the greatest of those mercies on earth, because it is what brings you nearest to our blessed Saviour, is also the most distinct pledge of continued and increasing mercies to come. Because God has just given us the very Body and Blood of His Son, therefore we come boldly to the throne of grace, asking for help to do those good works which He has prepared for us to walk in.

Thus you see how the means of grace, offered, one after another, to Christian people in the Church of God, ought to serve as so many reasons for depending on Him for more and more grace: so many fearful condemnations to those who go back, or do not go forward. And this holds true of every person, whether he chooses to attend to God's offers, and employ His means of grace, or no. It is still equally true, surely, that our blessed Lord means you mercy every time He invites you to His holy Table; every time He causes you to be reminded of your Baptism, which you very likely have all but forgotten, or of Confirmation, which you may probably have slighted or profaned. These are, all of them, His gracious beginnings; and where they are, you may be quite certain He is waiting to do you good, the moment you will turn to Him. His mind is towards you, as it was towards His ancient people; to whom His

words were such as these: "Cast away from you all your transgressions whereby ye have transgressed, and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?"

The means of grace, such as I have now mentioned, are common to the whole Church. But let us consider a case of a more private and personal kind, between God and each man's own conscience. Let us suppose any one, after years, it may be, of carelessness and irreligion, touched with some feelings of his sins, some thought of his spiritual condition. Every such thought and feeling, depend on it, is a sure sign that God intends that man to repent in earnest. If you let such misgivings pass unimproved and hurry back again like a dog to his vomit, do not think you are just where you were. No: you are in a much worse condition, God has knocked again at the door of your heart, and you have again refused to open, and let Him in to dwell there. On the other hand, if by His grace you really open your ear to instruction, then you have this blessed assurance, that the very first scruple thus arising in you is a proof that God has not cast you off: you may be forgiven and saved; only lose no time, lest this mercy too be thrown away.

And when you have once begun, really and steadily, to mind the great work of your salvation, when you find yourself in good truth more earnest and fervent in prayer, more awake and alive to the presence of Almighty God, more concerned to please your Saviour in all things, then you may humbly consider, that every hour of real improvement is a fresh sign of His gracious purpose towards you: thus

you may quiet any misgivings, which either sloth or discontent, or (as sometimes happens) bodily infirmity may at times excite within you. Only be very much on your guard against anything like praising yourself. Remember the Pharisee in the parable: a good work had begun in him; for punctual payment of God's dues, and fasting to keep himself in order, were surely, so far, good things: but he threw all the good of them away, he turned them into occasions of evil, by trusting in them, and valuing himself upon them. Never forget, that this snare is laid for you. When Satan cannot prevent good beginnings, his next point is, to get you to praise yourself for them; not always to praise yourself in words, but often, what is still more dangerous, to *think* over your own praise silently. This is a deep and most enticing art; and those who know, by their own conscience, that they are apt to be led away by it, and to sit musing on their own good deeds, have as much need as any sinner in the world to watch and pray without ceasing.

However, thus much is certain: that nothing *besides* amendment in practice, purer and holier thoughts, words and actions, nothing short of this can be safely depended on as a token of men's final salvation. As far as we dare to judge of it all, we must judge of it by that rule, and by no other: not by our much *knowledge* of divine words, no, nor of divine things either; nor yet by our quick and strong feelings, when we read or hear of the sufferings of our Saviour, or other affecting parts of Holy Scripture; much less are you to judge yourself in a state of grace, because you have *more* knowledge, or

more good feeling, than many or most of your acquaintance. These are, indeed, broken reeds to lean on, without good practice to follow them, good practice persevering to the end.

And observe, I mean by good *practice*, not what the world means, only or chiefly, doing your duty to your neighbour, but I mean especially, doing your duty to your Saviour: trying to live by faith in His Cross, to please Him in all things, for He died for you. *These* things will bring a man peace at the last; as for high knowledge and quick feelings, and thankful recollections of mercies received in times past, they are all good as beginnings: but if not followed up, they may, and will, be lost.

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'Are we, then, never to be certain? never to be assured of our final salvation?' We know of no promise that we shall be so here in this present world. But we do know that we are commanded, as long as we are in this world, to work out our salvation with fear and trembling: we do know, that the great Owner of the world begun by His Spirit a good work in us, when He called us to be Christians, and has given us many tokens since, that He will perform that work unto the end, if our sin and unbelief drive Him not away. This we do know for certain; and therefore we may be sure that it is wisest and best,

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This being so, it was perfectly natural that when mention had been made of a man's brother trespassing against him, S. Peter should be the one among

the disciples to ask such a question as that in the text, 'How often are we to forgive?' for it is just the thought which might arise in a religious childlike mind. 'What should one do in such and such a case? How far is such and such a duty to be carried?' This is a kind of matter, which earnest young people are very apt to be discussing among themselves: and the *most* childlike will be the one to come to speak of it to his elders. Accordingly S. Peter comes to our Lord and asks Him, "How oft shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? until seven times?" And our Lord takes occasion from his asking to teach both him and us that most joyful and comfortable yet grave and aweful lesson, that He is ready to forgive all, if we will but be ready to forgive those who have offended us.

I do not however intend now to enlarge on the special duty of forgiving, which however hard to practise, is easy enough to understand, and of which our Lord reminds us every time we say a prayer; causing us to say, "Forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." I am not now going to speak of this duty of forgiving in particular, but rather of the way which we are apt to get into in respect of all duties in general, setting bounds to them, and making out that they do not reach to this or that case. This is done by some people in their simplicity and imperfection, by others in a false, self-pleasing, hypocritical way: they try somehow to make a bargain with God, and to get off and save their souls at last, with the least possible sacrifice and cost to themselves. S. Peter, as I said, is an instance of the first sort, asking as a child might,

how many times a person might trespass against another, and yet that other be bound to forgive. The Pharisees are an instance of the other sort, in their unfair and presumptuous ways of dealing with so many of the commandments: making out for instance, that people might hate their enemies, because Moses said only, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour." It is plain, I say, that this question of S. Peter's might be asked by a person in either of these two senses, either by a simple disciple like S. Peter himself, meaning no harm, but not well putting together the truths which he had learned: or by a malicious, unforgiving, ill-tempered person, devising to find an excuse for the indulgence of his evil unkind spirit. Either way our Lord has vouchsafed to give us a complete answer to the question. If any man fear, that to go on forgiving whatever wrong one has received is too much to ask, too hard, absolutely impossible: our Saviour here tells him plainly that it is not too hard, it is our absolute duty, it is quite possible: else He would not have commanded it. If any man be inclined to say, How can it be right to go on forgiving all the bad things that are done? is it not too great an encouragement to sinners? behold here is the Judge of all the earth, declaring it to be His Will, that we should forgive from our hearts, forgive every thing, forgive even when it is our duty to punish: this He declares to be so entirely His Will, that without it we are sure to be delivered to the tormentors for ever. These are our Lord's answers to the childish and ignorant inquirer. But if there be any person who wanting to be forgiven himself, wanting to keep his Christian privileges,

wants also to be allowed to bear malice and have unkind feelings towards any one whatever, for any cause whatever, to such an one Christ speaks by His reply to S. Peter, and still more by the parable which follows it, and says, 'Nay, it cannot be. *I* died for *all* thy sins, not for seven only, but for seven thousand, seven million if there are so many: I am ready to absolve thee from all at the last day, if thou have but truly repented of them: and dost thou limit the number of wrongs which thou wilt forgive? darest thou say in thine heart, Thus far I will bear with the man, and account him a brother, but no farther?' Think, what if God Almighty were to adopt the same measure with thee and declare thee unpardonable, howsoever thou mightest repent, if thy sins went beyond a certain number. What chance wouldest thou have, my brother, of being forgiven? Again if a man say, this and that I can forgive, it does not wound and disturb me so very deeply, so very incurably: but such another thing—to be told, e. g. that I am a liar—is past bearing: I neither can nor will endure it: to such a thought as this our Saviour speaks and says, 'Behold Me, ye unforgiving, here nailed to the bitter Cross; these Wounds are made in My sacred Body, these rivers run down of My precious Blood, I endure all these pangs of death, for *every one* of *your* sins: I make no exception, no distinction: I die for all: else sad indeed and very doubtful would your case be: I forgive you ten thousand talents; you must in all reason and gratitude forgive your hundred pence.'

And as it is in the matter of forgiveness, so it is in respect of all other parts of our duty. We are not

to be asking with how little God Almighty will be contented; how *cheaply* we may go to heaven: such a question would shew that we have no real love for God at all. But we ought to be asking, how much we can do for God, and not to be satisfied with ourselves until we have tried our best to do it. A mother grudges no pain, no inconvenience, no labour, as too severe and wearisome, when it is for her child: Why? Because she loves her child dearly: and when we love Christ in earnest, though our love be but as a grain of mustard seed, we shall not grudge Him any of our good things. He grudged us nothing; Why should we be niggard towards Him? He grudged us nothing, for He spared us His only Son. Why should we make much ado about any thing we can spare to Him?

You see your principle, you see our Saviour's rule: that is, not to be nicely calculating how far you may go without grievous sinful liberties; how little you may do for God without falling under the sentence of the wicked and slothful servant. Rather His rule is 'Come on, come forward: be not afraid, you cannot do too much for Me.' If you have done right seven times, overcome seven temptations, do it again the eighth time, and for the seventy times seven, and then go on to the seven times seven thousand, if God in His mercy give you so many chances of serving Him. For example, we will suppose that you have a very troublesome unkind neighbour, who has been for years in the way of annoying you: who seems to be trespassing against you, not seven but seventy times a day and you have borne with him so long: you have tried to be as kind to him as ever you could be.

Well: but perhaps he has done something now, more provoking than all the rest: are you still to forgive him? May you not say, 'Now I know his pretences to repentance are all a sham: I will not receive him, though he turn again to me?' No: you may not say this: except you would wish our Lord Jesus Christ, when He comes to take account of you, to say, 'I will forgive this sinner all but such and such a sin, but *that* I cannot forgive, it was so very wilful.' Think, my brethren, what a horror it would be, when we are standing before the Judgement-seat to hear our Lord pause when He comes to that part of our account and say, 'This man professed that he could not (he *would* not,) pass over such and such a sin in his brother: well then, I cannot pass over such and such sins of his.' What if Christ should say so to you or to me? Whither should we turn? Where should we go for refuge? Alas, there is none: our doom in that case would be sealed.

And the like backwardness would surely be very dangerous in any other part of charity. As long as you have enough and to spare, when Jesus Christ comes to you in the person of any poor man, and says, 'I am hungry, give me meat, I am thirsty, give me drink,' do not I beseech you, turn Him away merely on the ground that you have given away much before. As one of the old Fathers says, 'You do not deny your own appetite, though it claims meals from you every day: you do not say sternly to your own body, I fed you yesterday, and the day before, and so many days ever since I can remember: I shall hold my hand now: I think I have done enough for you.' We do not say this to our own

bodies, craving to be fed every day: for their comfort, not to say their luxury, we go on from the seven to the seventy times seven. Why are we not ashamed to say the like discouraging words to Christ Himself, seeking our aid for His poor members? And yet I am afraid it is the way of many persons: merely because they seem to themselves to have given away a good deal, they will stop, and give no more: not because they cannot afford it, but because they have no fancy to give more: and they say to themselves, or rather something which is not a good spirit whispers to them, 'Surely a man may do what he will with his own.' Alas, my brethren, you do not know what you lose, when you so unworthily put by golden opportunities of making a real sacrifice to your Saviour.

And there is something again very like this in another department of Christian duty; the watching and denying ourselves; the keeping our bodies under and bringing them into subjection. When persons have gone on being chaste and temperate for a certain number of months or years, the Evil one not uncommonly assaults them in this way among others; he whispers to them, 'What a long, what an endless, what a dismal strife is this: you have fought the good fight so long, yet here are the old temptations coming again: it is too much for human nature; surely you may indulge yourself this once and not be so very guilty.' And so it happens not so very seldom, that the fruit and crown of years of steady self-denial is thrown away and the devil has his own way with men and women at an age when one would rather hope there would be less and less chance of

their falling. Now this is just another instance of a person enquiring with S. Peter (but not in the same guileless spirit as S. Peter) 'Lord, how oft? until seven times?' *How often* am I to deny myself, and resist the temptations to ill-company; until seven times? or, may be, for seven years? Nay, says the Great unerring Judge, As long as thou art in the body there must be self-denial. "I say not unto thee, until seven times, but until seventy times seven." No number of meals, no number of days, will be sufficient for thee not to have taken poison heretofore, if thou shouldest now in some wild moment venture upon it. So it is with the poison of lust or intemperance or sloth: it will be your soul's death if you do not go on abstaining for any length of time that our Lord continues your trial.

One more instance I will mention, and that a very obvious one. There are many who say to Jesus in these our days, some simply, some in more or less guile, 'How oft shall I pray, go to Church, communicate, do other offices of devotion? Until seven times?' meaning, 'How *little* will be enough?' dreading to have no such services to go through, but not desiring to have more of them than are necessary. This again is a snare, and an evil sign when it happens. The humble and loving spirit says to itself, 'How can I go on so long without my Blessed Lord? If I cannot serve Him at all in His Church on week-days, by His grace I will be the more diligent in coming there on Sundays. If I cannot communicate weekly, at least I will monthly.' But the ordinary, worldly, unloving spirit, the spirit which would rather serve God with that which costs it nothing, will

say, 'I see the rubric commands us to communicate three times in the year, *that* will be quite sufficient for me:' and he will choose himself out short prayers for morning and evening and will come to Church at least once on a Sunday, such being the acknowledged rule of all decent people: but for more days and seasons of Church-going, and additional hours of prayer, he secretly rejoices in his heart, that they are not now customary, and that there is no discredit, but in many men's eyes rather the contrary, in doing without them. But, my dear brethren and sisters in Christ, God does not so stint His hours and days for doing us good. He is not kind to us on Sundays only, nor on certain hours only of the day, but every day and all day long. How then can it be right or affectionate in us wilfully to stint Him in our returns of thanksgiving? Now do not mistake me. I am not reproving, as though the greater part of us were in positive sin for not coming oftener here, or keeping more hours of prayer, than we do. But what I am afraid of is, that too many allow themselves to be indifferent about the matter. It is no trouble at all to them, that they cannot worship God oftener. And I will tell you one reason why I fear this: I look round this Church, and it saddens me to see so many empty places; especially (for I will speak it plainly) on the women's side, of a Sunday morning. But I say to myself, So many of them are taken up with household matters, they wish perhaps to come, but they cannot manage to come. That comforts one for a while: but bye and bye one cannot help noticing, that when the needs of the household become less, as in course of time they naturally do, when children grow up, still the mothers are many of them as rarely

at Church as ever. Why is this, but because they had not the real wish to come oftener; when they thought of it, they were inclined, with S. Peter to ask our Lord, How often shall the Church bell go, and I be bound to make ready and answer it? Will not once every Sunday be sufficient? And so they were content to put off their Lord with the very smallest measure of service, paying Him just so much as they could not omit without actual sin. They are got into this way, and so when they *are* more free to serve Him, they have no heart nor mind to it.

What I wish and pray is, that which our Lord enjoined on S. Peter, that we may all learn to be *unreserved* in giving ourselves up to God, and serving Him: not to be so shy, so unwilling, so afraid of making sacrifices, little or great, for Christ's sake: not to make so many difficulties. It is not so where there is real love. The affectionate mother does not say, 'I washed and dressed and fed this child in the morning: why need I do it again this afternoon?' When people love God as truly as they love their children, they will not think so much of every little acknowledgement they render to Him, of every little instance in which they have put themselves out of the way for His service. God keeps back nothing from us, neither heaven, nor His Holy Spirit, nor His own Son to be our Sacrifice and the very Food of our souls. Why should we be so sparing, why keep so strict accounts with Him? For shame's sake and for love's sake, let it be so no longer; let us try at least to forgive, and love, and do good, and pray, not as little as we dare, but as much and well as ever we can. "God loveth a cheerful giver."

SERMON XXXI.

THE LAW OF LIBERTY.

TWENTY-SECOND SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

S. JAMES ii. 12.

"So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty."

WE all of us naturally think a good deal of freedom, liberty, having our own way: and yet I suppose that we all at the bottom of our hearts have a certain respect and regard for law and order, and walking by certain rules. Thus you may observe that the same children who are most free and joyous in their play, are also (if they are at all well trained) very often the most exact and orderly in their work and lessons. Thus also high spirited youths, who had seemed as if they could in no wise be kept in any kind of dutifulness or order at home, are often found, if they become soldiers or sailors, careful and obedient enough in the discipline they are called on to learn. Why is this, but because, as I said, they have in them both these two instincts, a natural love of freedom and independence, and also a natural love of regularity and order? They hate to do things against

their own will, and yet they like to be told what to do. How can these two minds, seeming so contrary, ever be brought into one? How can a young man longing to be free ever submit himself in good earnest wholly and entirely to the will of another, even though that other be his Saviour? We like our liberty, and we like the law; how are we to keep both in perfection? Simply if we hold fast by the Gospel which we have received: for the Gospel is a law of liberty: those who love order will find in it order and rule, those who love their own way will find in the name Gospel perfect freedom.

I must try and make this a little plainer. In the first place, all men know that the holy Gospel of Jesus Christ is a law, and a perfect law: it binds us, one and all, to our several duties: it draws a line, and points to that line and says to each one of us, "[a] This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." And this, not now and then, at certain times, when we are inclined to attend to it, but at all times, at every moment of our life. It is a law for boys and girls, a law for young men and young women, a law for the middle-aged, a law for the old and the dying. It provides for all times and also for all sorts of persons. It is a sufficient rule both in health and in sickness, in riches and poverty, in prosperity and adversity; for beginners, for persevering and steady persons, for those who have fallen and desire to be true penitents. For all these and for all others the Gospel is a law and rule, a perfect law, a commandment holy and just and good: how should it be

[a] Is. xxx. 21.

otherwise, seeing that it is the very same with the commandments spoken by the Most High God from Mount Sinai, and with the blessings uttered by our Lord and Saviour to His disciples and the multitude on another mountain? The Gospel is the new law, the law of Christ, the most strict and exact of all laws: and yet it is called the law of liberty: it makes and keeps us perfectly free. Mark that, my brethren, here is a rule more particular, more interfering with every part of our behaviour, than any other could possibly be. It never for a moment leaves us alone, its eye is always upon us, searching and judging whatever we think speak or do, it lays its strong hand upon us: on all the limbs of our body, all the powers of our soul, to move, stay, direct them at its will, in great matters and in small: and yet it leaves us entirely free: God's service (so saith the collect) is perfect freedom. We are sure it is so, for our Lord Himself hath told us so: "[b] If ye continue in My word, then are ye My disciples indeed; and ye shall know the Truth, and the Truth shall make you free."

Now how is this, that the strictest of all laws should be the only one which leaves them free who obey it? First, because it delivers us from a fearful bondage; the bondage and slavery of sin in which we were born; that bondage which S. Paul describes when he says "[c] The good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do." "I am carnal, sold (i. e. sold for a slave) under sin." For as you all well know, such is our natural condition since the fall of Adam, that no man, left to himself,

[b] S. John viii. 31, 32. [c] Rom. vii. 19, 14.

could escape being under the dominion of sin. Whatever good thoughts and feelings he might have, he could never bring them to good effect; they would be at best only as the strugglings of one bound in heavy chains and quite unable to shake them off. This is the slavery in which we are born: and there is a worse slavery which we bring on ourselves by indulging our own evil passions; going on in the ways of lust, of malice, of dishonesty, of profaneness, in spite of the knowledge of God, and His grace given us before we could know. There is the slavery of bad and corrupt habits, whereby men seem even forced to swear and blaspheme, to lie and deceive, to seduce others and dishonour their own bodies; in short, to do all the works of the devil: a bondage such as that wicked Ahab's of whom it is written that he "[d] sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord." Every child of Adam is naturally *sold under sin*, but the wilful habitual sinner has *sold himself:* he has doubly riveted and fastened his own chains. And yet even for such an one, and much more for the ignorant heathen, and for the little child who is only born in sin, but never yet committed any, there is deliverance, sure deliverance, if they do not put it away from them. The blessed Gospel is sent down from heaven to be to each of them a law of liberty: to be a law which makes those who receive it free and able to practise it which otherwise they could not be: and so it is unlike all other laws: for they tell you what is right or wrong for you to do, but do not furnish you with power to hold to the right and keep from the wrong. The law of the land bids you pay

[d] 1 Kings xxi. 25.

your debts, but it does not provide you with money to do so: the law of Moses said, "Thou shalt not commit adultery," but it was not accompanied with any promise or appointed means whereby people might obtain grace to subdue those evil passions which carry them away to such sins. But Christ's law, which is His Gospel, our perfect law of liberty, not only teaches us exactly to know what is sin and how we should overcome it, but also it gives us strength and power, if we will, to overcome it in deed. There is as much difference between the two, as if a tired person should ask his way of two persons on the road, and one of them should only just point out the way, the other lift him and bear him safely along it. So the Apostle teaches, saying, "[e] The law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope," i. e. the Gospel of Christ, "did; by the which we draw nigh unto God;" not only learn about Him but draw nigh unto Him. The law of Christ works this for us by uniting us to Him in Holy Baptism, whereby we receive His good Spirit, and are put in a way to overcome our sins, if we will. And again, if we have fallen into grievous sin of our own, and are lying as it were on the ground, like the wounded traveller whom the good Samaritan saw, and are in no wise able to lift up ourselves; then Christ's law, the blessed Gospel, comes to us not only with its gracious promises, but with the gift also of penitential grace, the benefit of Absolution to seal our pardon, and the strengthening and refreshing of Christ's Body and Blood to undo the accursed work of sin, and make us again (please God) as free as at

[e] Heb. vii. 19.

the moment of our Baptism. Christ's law is a law of liberty, because while it gives us a full account of our duty, it brings us also into communion with Him through Whom alone we have grace and power to perform it.

And there seems to be another reason why the Gospel and law of Christ is called by this especial name, a law of liberty. For thus it is, my brethren. When a man gives himself quite entirely up to our gracious Saviour, it not only frees him altogether from all the sad slavery of sin, but it puts him also in a new and most blessed condition: not a better kind of slavery, as if one should change an unkind master for a kind one, all the while continuing a slave, but a free and very glorious service, much like that wherewith the blessed Angels minister before the Almighty King of heaven. A slave is a person who must do all his master's will, right or wrong, whether it please himself or no. Now the Angels in heaven do all their Lord's will: they cannot swerve a hair's breadth from it, either to the right hand or the left: they cannot but "[f]fulfil His commandment and hearken unto the voice of His words," yet they are not slaves, for they do it all freely and willingly, it is their happiness and glory to do it: just so is it with regenerate souls on earth; their freedom grows in proportion with their holiness. By earnest prayers and endeavours and above all by devout Communions, their hearts and wills are more and more sanctified, more and more one and the same with the heart and mind of Jesus Christ and the will of Almighty God. Angels and glorified Saints are quite

[f] Ps. ciii. 20.

free, because their will is quite one with God's will: we on earth are growing more and more in this true Christian liberty, as the good Spirit trains us more perfectly in conforming our wills to the Will of our heavenly Father. Where among mortal men, should you think, is more entire and happy freedom, than in some loving and wisely ordered family, when father and mother and sons and daughters are all so thoroughly and affectionately agreed on all matters of consequence, that the father's will is the will of all the rest? And this is but a faint type and image of the saints in heaven agreeing in will with their Lord, and therefore being in perfect freedom. And as the younger children in such a happy family, would learn that perfect agreement with their parents, by submitting their own wills to them in every thing, while they were themselves, yet children, so the saints only attained the glorious liberty of the children which they now enjoy without measure, by giving up their own wills unreservedly to His Will when they were here on trial.

This being so, our Gospel freedom being, to have the same will as Almighty God, we may understand that in proportion as the Gospel does its work on our souls, we shall need less of positive command to do right, and shall become more able and willing to act by the spirit without waiting for the letter of a command: we shall not be so very particular in demanding to be told, where in Holy Scripture such a thing is enjoined or forbidden: rather we shall take the least hint, if it be real, of what He would have us do, and try to act on it as the best chance of

pleasing Him. For instance, there is no precept in Scripture that I know of directly ordaining in so many words that Christians for ever should keep Sunday as the holiest day of the week instead of Saturday: yet all sincere and reasonable Christians do so, because, looking freely and fairly at the great things done for us on that day, and at the conduct of the first Christians concerning it, we cannot doubt that it was His Will so to set it apart. Again, I cannot remember any text, distinctly ordering all Christians to say their prayers every morning and evening: yet we all know very well, that whoever wilfully neglected that service, we should hardly set him down for a Christian at all: because in that case the will of God, though not expressly written down, is so plain that no good Christian has ever doubted it. And I make no question, that as people go on, and grow better and better Christians by daily endeavour, there are more and more things not expressly mentioned in the Bible which they come to perceive to be sacred duties, and doing them freely, without stopping for a command, they grow, as S. Paul says, more "[g] perfect and complete in all the will of God." It is so, you know, in all acts and trades and works: as people come to know and understand them better, they may be left more to themselves: i. e. they may have greater liberty. That is the difference between a skilled workman, be he carpenter, mason, smith, or whatever else one may think of, and another who is unskilled: the one wants to be told every turn of the work before-

[g] Col. iv. 12.

hand, and to be watched every moment: the other may be left in great measure to himself: i. e. left at liberty. S. Peter (for instance), in the Gospel for this day shewed himself to be a beginner, and not quite acquainted as yet with the spirit of Christianity, when he asked the Lord that question, "[h] How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?" He seems to have made two mistakes, which he could not have made, had he known more of the perfect freedom of Christ's people under the Gospel. First, he may have imagined that *entire* unlimited forgiveness, quite passing over *any* number, ever so great, of transgressions, was out of the question for any one: he speaks as if of course there must be *some* special number of offences, after which none need be forgiven. This is one mistake, he did not know that the Holy Spirit given to the members of Christ would so entirely free them from all tendency to malice: and he made also this second mistake, that he imagined that one ought to *know* that exact number of times: like a child who is set a certain number of words to spell. How our Lord corrected him, you know: "[i] I say not unto thee, until seven times: but until seventy times seven," and you may partly judge what kind of words He would say to any of us, falling so often as we do into the very same kind of fault as S. Peter's. We shew ourselves every way beginners in religion, and far more inexcusable than S. Peter in that inquiry, when *we* are for narrowing our duty, as he proposed, within exact limits: as in this very matter

[h] S. Matt. xviii. 21. [i] Ib. 22.

of forgiving. Notwithstanding our Lord's words, I fear nothing is more usual than for persons who have been or think themselves ill-used, to say in their hearts, I will endure so much, but such and such behaviour I never can and never will forgive. Our Lord made no such reserve; He died for *all* our sins. He makes no exceptions, but forgives *all* when truly repented of. If we truly believe and consider this, we shall leave out no one, but forgive all from the heart, and so far make known our forgiveness, that the person who has wronged us may always be sure that on his truly repenting all will be blotted out.

So again in respect of the outward service of God; prayer, Church going, Holy Communion; there is a constant temptation to say, how often *must* I go, how many services may I miss and not sin grievously? We are in danger of enquiring, on purpose, what is the least measure of worship and sacrifice which our God will be satisfied with. How does this agree with true love, with that feeling which would make us glad to have as much of our Lord's company as ever we can?

Once more: in respect of avoiding dangerous liberties, keeping far away from the sinful lusts of the flesh, many walk as if the right question for a Christian man or woman to ask were, how near may I go to the edge of mischief? Nay worse, what lengths may I go in sin and yet not sin mortally? which is as if one should say, How much may I burn myself and yet not be burned to death?

In these and other ways men are apt to shew too

plainly, that whatever professions they make, their hearts are not really in God's service. How is so great an evil to be mended? There is but one way. All would be right if we would seriously try to walk by love, true love of Him Who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own Blood. True love would set us upon earnestly seeking what would please the Beloved, and courageously doing it. Would that you and I may do so for the rest of our lives; for there is no other way to heaven. "[k] If ye love Me, keep My commandments," is the very law of liberty, by which we shall be judged.

[k] S. John xiv. 15.

SERMON XXXII.

THE WARNINGS OF ALMIGHTY GOD.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

JOEL ii. 1.

"Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy Mountain."

My brethren, have you ever considered in real earnest what a burden lies upon us all for the many *warnings* we have received, and are daily receiving from the good providence of God? If we have thought upon them, have we at all thought worthily? I sometimes hear some of you who are parents, complaining sadly of their children when we apply to them to keep better order, as being entrusted with those little ones. We go, for instance, to a father or mother, and say: 'Such and such a son or daughter of yours is unruly at school, or profane in his behaviour in Church: or he uses bad words:' or whatever the fault may be: and the parent answers us after this fashion; 'I am sure it is not for want of speaking to; I warn him and tell him of it night and day, but I cannot get him to mind me.' Among other sad thoughts which come into one's mind when one hears such sayings, surely a person may well reflect with himself, Alas, our Father in heaven has

too much reason to say the same of me and of too many of us. It has not been for want of His speaking to us, that we are what we are in the way of sin and disobedience. Most truly might He too say concerning us, I spake unto him night and day, but he would not hear. Too truly might He address to us the sorrowful reproof so often repeated by His prophets to His people Israel in their last and worst days: "I have spoken unto you, rising early and speaking, but ye hearkened not unto Me."

I say, hardly any of us think enough of this; not even those who at this present time are by God's mercy more serious and religious than they have been at some time past. Great indeed has been the mercy which they have experienced; infinitely greater than they will ever be able worthily to acknowledge in this world; but such thanks as man *might* give are too often sadly wanting, because people do not consider and go over in their own minds the many calls and warnings which they had slighted, before that one which by His providence was the gracious instrument of their conversion and amendment. Look back, O thou penitent sinner, into past years: was not the Voice really and truly sounding in thine ears all along, from the very beginning of thy sin, "O do not this abominable thing which I hate?" Dost thou not now perceive that every stroke of the Church bell, every good and Christian word spoken in thine ears, every verse from God's Holy Word, every call to pray, in public or in private, was a separate and distinct warning to thee not to go on in *any* unbelieving way, not to continue living without God in the world? and that

every time God caused thee to hear or say or read or recollect any of His sayings against thine own particular sin, it was as truly His special warning to thee, as if thou hadst heard His voice from heaven? I mean, it was a separate warning to the thief every time he heard said read or remembered the eighth commandment. If then any one who ever was a thief hath now found grace truly to repent and amend, yet let him humble himself all his life long with the thought, the sad and true thought, how much sooner he might have turned if he would; how every call and warning wilfully slighted and rejected was, as it were, a fresh act of theft on his part, and so of all other sins.

And as for him, if any there be, who may have come hither in his sin or irreligion, O that the Merciful One may even here and now touch that man's heart, and open his eyes to see what he is bringing upon himself by going on in that bad way. For even now and here is he warned; and it is a warning not from man but from God; it is the Voice of the Lord, uttered in the house of the Lord. Yes: and what makes it yet more aweful, it is but one warning coming after many, who can tell how many? which thou hast from time to time received, here or elsewhere. Thou dost not escape them by staying away from Church, or by refusing to look in thy Bible, or by getting out of the way of good advice and good example. Thou must not think so to escape God's warnings, and the burden laid upon those who will not take them. No. The very sight of the Church, or of the Bible, or of the person whose advice you shrink from, is God's warning to you: and

is set down, along with your manner of receiving it, in that full and true account which you will have to make up with Him bye and bye.

I will now point to you one very special help which Holy Scripture offers to all who desire to understand and carry away with them this serious doctrine of warnings, and to be in earnest the better for it. The Bible, especially the Old Testament, doth in very many places teach that doctrine by the parable (so we may call it) of a trumpet. We heard of it twice in the first lesson. verse one, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion," and again, verse fifteen, "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly." What is this trumpet? it is the warning voice of the Lord. For consider, my brethren, what are the uses of a trumpet? (I mean, when it is sounded by itself, and not in concert or harmony with other musical instruments), and you will find, I think, that it is almost always for warning, in one sense or another. Therefore the Lord, when He chose Israel to be His own people, when He put Himself at their head as Chief and Captain, to lead them in due array through the wilderness, vouchsafed to make a special law for providing them with trumpets: you may read it in the tenth chapter of Numbers. "The Lord said unto Moses 'Make thee two trumpets of silver . . . and the priests the sons of Aaron shall blow with the trumpets'." As much as to say, that warning God's people is part of the special business of God's priests. They, in His Name, are to say "This is the way, walk ye in it," when men walk to the right hand, and when they walk to the left.

The priests were to blow with the trumpets: and on what occasions were they to blow? First, for the calling and gathering of the people together: as we hear in the lesson, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly." For so the Lord had enacted, "When they blow with the trumpets, all the assembly shall assemble themselves to thee at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation." Next, the trumpets were to be used for the setting forward on a march: "they shall blow an alarm," saith He, "for their journeys." See, my brethren, how these two uses of the trumpets set before us, as in a parable, the various warnings of our Blessed Lord by His priests. When we go forth among the heathen and unbelievers, or among fallen heathenish Christians, and say to them, 'Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand:' when we seek to gather them, being dispersed, into one body, and one congregation, that is the Lord's trumpet for the assembling of His people together. When, being gathered, we speak to them in His Name, and try to confirm and edify them more and more in the knowledge and love of Him and of His Son Jesus Christ our Lord: that again is the Lord's trumpet for the marching onward of the camp of Israel, each one in his place according to their tribes. Again, it is a known use of the trumpet to sound an alarm and encourage soldiers to march boldly against their enemies. "If ye go to war in your land," saith the Lord by Moses, "against the enemy that oppresseth you, then ye shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and ye shall be remembered before the Lord your God, and shall be saved from your enemies." And so,

because we are all Christ's soldiers, enlisted and sworn to fight under His banner against sin, the world and the devil; Christ's word in the mouth of His priests and of His Church is His trumpet call to keep us in heart and in spirit, and make us to stand up in His cause manfully and courageously, as one man. He ordained also that His trumpets should sound in the beginning of all the solemn feasts. "In the days of your gladness, and in your solemn days, and in the beginnings of your months, ye shall blow with the trumpets over your burnt-offerings, and over the sacrifices of your peace-offerings, that they may be to you for a memorial before your God. According to the well known psalm, "Blow ye the trumpet in the new moon, even in the time appointed, and upon our solemn feast day." And this is especially directed to be done at the feast of "the Jubilee," in the great fiftieth year, when all slaves were to go free; "Thou shalt cause the trumpet of jubilee to sound throughout thy land." What is this but the Gospel sounding out in all the Churches of the world every Sunday in the year, and on all the great feasts of the Church, particularly on Christmas Easter and Whitsuntide, preaching especially deliverance to the captives, to those who were under the bondage of sin and death? And when we look into the history, and see how the law was carried out, still the same great typical meaning rises before us at every moment. Did the walls of Jericho fall down at the sound of Joshua's seven trumpets? So shall the whole kingdom of Satan fall before the sound of the Gospel of Christ, preached in all its fulness, with the sevenfold Gifts of the

Holy Ghost. Did the same seven trumpets sound before the ark, when David brought it to Mount Zion? and again when Solomon had brought it into the temple? and once more when they had returned from Babylon, and were laying the foundation of the second temple? So the preaching of the Holy Gospel has attended on every revival in Christ's Church, every great and good work.

Now these several soundings of the Jewish trumpets were none of them mere flourishes of joy: they were so many serious and aweful warnings. When the trumpet for the assembly sounded, the people were to come together: if they did not, it was at their own peril. When the trumpet sounded for a march, whoever lingered or stayed behind was of course to be punished as an offending soldier: and much more, if in cowardice he drew back from fighting the Lord's battles. The trumpets on the feast-days were a token to every Israelite to appear before God at that time as best he might, on pain of being cut off from God's people. Then, and on each special occasion on which, as I have said, the sound of trumpets is mentioned, the trumpet notes which declared the mercy of God were notes very terrible and aweful to such as should abuse that mercy. They were such tokens of His Presence as made their case indeed inexcusable: when they were still disobeyed and scorned, how could it be but that as the psalm threatens, the revolters should be given up to their own hearts' lusts and let to follow their own imaginations? So and much more is it with respect to the Gospel warnings, and such as live within hearing of them. They bring with each one a great

burden of duty, both to us who speak and to you who hear them. Hear the sayings of the great prophet Ezekiel, whose trumpet (if I may so speak) was caused to ring through the land in severer and more aweful tones than any of the rest. "If when the watchman seeth the sword come upon the land, he blow with the trumpet and warn the people; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning, if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head; but if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand." Oh, my brethren, are not such Scriptures as this enough to make our hearts die within us? ours, when we sadly reflect, how often, for one foolish reason or another, we have neglected to sound the trumpet; to warn you in God's Name publicly or privately, of some great danger you were running into: yours, when you begin to count up the times upon times when you have either avoided warning, or stopped your ears and hardened your hearts against it. Alas! what if it should be always so with us? What if even at this very moment, an Angel should be registering in heaven this very warning which is being uttered on earth to the condemnation of some of you, who may refuse to regard it, and of those, to whose negligence in former times your present carelessness may too likely be owing!

Take notice also, my brethren, that by our Lord's golden rule, 'Do to others, as you would they should

do to you,' the hearers and readers of serious warnings are commanded and encouraged not only to make much of them for themselves, but also to use discreet and charitable ways of conveying them on to others. For what if some soldier in a camp, awakened himself by the trumpet calling the host to assemble, should perceive a comrade lying near him still in his sleep, and not take the little trouble of awakening him, but leave him to be punished for breach of discipline? Should you not say that it was very inconsiderate and unkind? very unlike a thorough, dutiful soldier? Consider then I beseech you, dear brethren, whether it is not much the same kind of negligence, when serious, thoughtful persons take little or no account of the opportunities God gives them for conveying on to their brethren the spiritual good which He has placed within their own reach. E.g., Church-goers, or regular readers of the sacred Scriptures, would do well to be on the watch for quiet yet effectual ways of putting before the careless ones what has come to them in reading or hearing, and seemed particularly touching or useful. We cannot of course in this place preach to those who never come to Church; they are not here, to attend to what we read out of Holy Scripture: but you who are here may do them much good if you will, by telling them sometimes, quietly and humbly, any thing read or said here which you think might go to their heart. They may often mind you, when they would not mind a clergyman. Aquila and Priscilla did unspeakable good, by repeating to Apollos what they had heard of S. Paul. O loving condescension of Him Whom we serve! Would we but dutifully mark His tokens, and endeavour, as He

gives us opportunity, to get others to do the same, we should not only, by His mercy, be sure to save our own souls, but we should have a chance also of some slight share in the crown of those who turn many to righteousness: of whom it is promised, "They shall shine as the stars, for ever."

In a word, brethren, you see how deeply we are concerned, one and all of us, in this Divine parable of the trumpet. Our whole life is full of warnings: warnings from above and from below: warnings to take and warnings to give. From many of us, too much of it, alas! has passed away with little or no regard to those warnings. May we be contrite and humble of heart in the remembrance of that past, and very watchful, very diligent, very courageous dutiful and loving for the future. May we never forget that a Day is coming, and is even now at hand; when a trumpet will sound whose voice we shall be forced to attend to; no choice will be given us, as now, to hear or to forbear. Now, when the Gospel trumpet calls us to Church or to Holy Communion, or to repentance, or to some work of charity, Christ draws us indeed, but He does not force us; we obey or not as we will: but the trumpet or voice of the Archangel, which is the trump of God, will leave us no choice at all. We must, one and all, assemble then: we must, one and all, take our place in the vast army before the judgement seat. On which side of our Lord shall it be?

Let us from our hearts ask Him for grace so to listen to His alarms while we are here, that it may be joy to us, and not despair, to hear that final alarm when it comes.

SERMON XXXIII.

THE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS.

TWENTY-THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

PHIL. iii. 18, 19.

"For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

THIS letter of S. Paul to the Philippians, as is clearly enough pointed out by the beginning of the first chapter, addresses itself particularly to well-meaning Christians, people who are so far honest in heart as to wish to serve God sincerely, and not make void His fatherly care in sending His ministers among them, and providing them with the means of grace. Now whereas such an amiable and right disposition is not seldom blemished, more or less, by indolence of mind, making men unwilling to consider deeply, and look unpleasant truths in the face; and especially, making it hard for them to believe that any error commonly received, and embraced perhaps by persons whom they like, can be very ruinous to men's souls;—observe how plainly the Apostle speaks

out, what earnest and vehement language he uses; so that no one, regarding his judgement, (or rather the judgement of the Holy Spirit by him,) could ever after think slightly of the sin and error here denounced by him. "Many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ; whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things."

To make the right use of these words, we must consider what sort of people the Apostle is here describing. Not, I should think, professed heathens, but rather, lukewarm, insincere Christians; for if they were not outwardly of that faith, there would have been little or no danger of well-meaning believers imitating them. But suppose them, in show and profession, Christians; suppose them to make up a very large portion of the visible Church of Christ, and the need of warning, of severe and constant warning against them, is clear at once, and very pressing. Not of unbelievers, then, but of insincere, inconsistent believers, is S. Paul speaking here in the text. And he seems as if, do what he would, he could hardly find words to express his sense of their peril. "I have told you before of them, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ;" not simply enemies, but *the* enemies, the worst enemies of that Name, besides which "there is none other under heaven given unto men, whereby they must be saved."

And no wonder their end should be, what he

next tells us, "destruction;" since they obstinately cast away from them the only hope and refuge of sinners, the Cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. This warning the Apostle accompanied with his tears. "I have told you of them," says he, "before, and now tell you *even weeping:*" weeping with regret and sorrow for them, that they should cast themselves into such misery; and with fear and anxiety for his own faithful people, lest they should be any how beguiled by their example. "They are the enemies of the Cross of Christ: whose end is destruction." These are his inspired words of warning, put first, as it seems, to rouse his hearers, and make them listen more attentively, to know what class of persons they might be, who, professing like themselves to be Christians, could deserve and receive so dreadful a sentence. And he leaves no one at a loss to know; the words that follow point out to every one, in a way which cannot be mistaken, what sort of persons he has in view. "Their God is their belly, and their glory is in their shame," because "they mind earthly things." Selfish, sensual persons, entirely swallowed up in the gross and brutish pursuits of this present evil world, could not be more emphatically described.

"Their God is their belly;" that is, as minds sincerely pious and Christian are taken up with the thought of God, and make it always their first care, whatever they do, to please Him; so these men are taken up with those low and mean appetites which men have in common with beasts: eating and drinking and bodily delights are their first care, the thing which they long for, the object for which they live

and act. One would think the mere pointing out to such persons, how they wilfully degrade themselves, how they let themselves, on purpose, down, as far as they may, to the condition of brutes; one would think this ought to be enough to produce something like repentance in them. If not as Christians, surely as men, they must feel it a shame and a reproach, to be wholly given up to the body. So one might expect; but what is the fact?

"Their glory," says S. Paul, "is in their shame;" they are grown so besotted, so brutish, by long indulgence of their bodily appetites, that they pride themselves and exult among their companions, each in being more wicked than another. For instance; among habitual drunkards, is it not made a matter of boasting to be mightier than the rest to drink wine, and of more strength to mingle strong drink: that is, in other words, to be a more hardened and reprobate sinner, and to go further in offending God? Men do not, I know, distinctly *mean* this: in many cases, they do not think *at all* of God when they thus affront Him with glorying in their sins: but who made them so hardened, so reckless, as to leave Him out of their thoughts? Was it not their own wilful corruption, in giving way more and more to passions which they knew to be wrong, to imaginations which they ought to have kept in order?

If any man say, his passions were strong, his nature weak, and though indeed he knew better, he had not strength to act upon that knowledge; here again he forgets, inexcusably, that he was not left to his own weak nature. He forgets that Almighty God, on Whom he might have called if he would

when he gave way to wilful sin; that Holy Spirit of grace, which is always close enough at hand, and surely always able to help him out of any, the most overpowering, temptation. It is for want of sincere prayer, timely begun and steadily kept up, that people go on yielding to their passions, till conscience is seared as with a hot iron, and they come absolutely to glory in their shame. From beginning to end, therefore, of this wretched progress, the disgrace and the sin is all men's own; they must not accuse frail nature, when they had God's good Spirit to help them; they must not say it was forgetfulness of God, not wilful defiance of Him, when they knew it was their own doing, in spite of many and many a warning, which brought them into such a state, that they could not well help forgetting Him. Nobody ever, among Christians, except by his own fault, falls into such a condition, as that his glory should be in his shame.

But observe next what is mentioned as the root and ground of all this mischief: "They mind earthly things;" or as the words properly mean, 'they are earthly-minded,' not heavenly-minded: all their thoughts, plans, and wishes, savour of this world and not of the next. Observe, I say, this earthly temper, to what, of course, it will bring men's souls. It will make them "enemies of the Cross of Christ;" their end destruction, their belly their God, and their worst shame their pride and glory. To many it seems a matter of course, a thing quite to be taken for granted, that living in the world amongst other men, they should not only follow the customs, but have the mind of the world: 'they must do as other

men do.' And the Gospel of Christ is very far from encouraging men to affect singularity. We are not required to go out of the world, but continuing as we generally must in the world, to set our minds upon something better. If we will not, there is no remedy, we must become enemies of the Cross of Christ. It is worth our while to consider more distinctly, how this grievous effect follows upon that earthly mind, which so many seem to consider as a mere pardonable failing.

First, If people will give themselves up to the hopes and desires of this present world; if their hearts are entirely taken up with making a fortune, with enjoying themselves, or any thing else of the like kind, which however important it may seem to us now, is sure after a little while to pass away and become as nothing; they cannot possibly judge aright of the deep heinousness of sin before God, or of the infinite value of what Christ has done to redeem us from its sad consequences. For instance, take a covetous man; the love of money and of self-indulgence has so worked itself into his very heart and mind, that it seems to him a matter of course to make that his rule in all things: he cannot, as it were, understand how any one should do otherwise. What the Scripture tells us, then, of God's anger against covetousness; the woe denounced on those restless men who add house to house and field to field; the sentence of S. Paul, when he says, that the love of money is the root of all evil, and of our Saviour, representing the rich man in the parable as condemned for choosing his good things in this world: all these things will seem overstrained,

strange, and unaccountable, to the worldly man: he will not enter at all into them, and however he may confess all in words, as he must, or deny the Scriptures, his heart will not really assent to them. How then should he possibly have a right notion of the danger he has brought himself into, by indulging that kind of temper? and not knowing the danger, how can he value the deliverance as he ought? how can he be duly thankful for the unspeakable love of the Son of God, in pouring out His soul unto death to deliver him from those very sins?

But the Apostle says of this earthly mind, that it makes men not only indifferent, but direct enemies, to the Cross of Christ: that is, it makes them unwilling to receive into their hearts the true doctrine of Jesus our Lord, suffering and dying to reconcile us sinners to His Father. It does not always make men unwilling to confess this doctrine with their lips; on the contrary, I fear we must own it, by too frequent experience, possible, to talk well of the Great Atonement, and take a pleasure in shewing to others how much men know on the subject, while their ordinary behaviour convicts them of still minding earthly things. For it is one thing to converse skilfully, and to be ready with Scripture texts, about the doctrine of the Cross, and it is another thing, to receive that blessed doctrine sincerely into your heart and conduct. An earthly-minded man may do the one, but he cannot in the nature of things do the other, without putting off his earthly mind. For what is it we mean, when we speak of receiving the doctrine of the Cross into our heart? We mean the same that our Saviour did, when He bade those who

would be His disciples "take up their Cross daily and follow Him." We mean the same that the Church means, when it tells us that our profession is to be made like unto our Saviour Christ; that "as He died and rose again for us, so should we, who are baptized, die from sin, and rise again unto righteousness." The change is so great, from an earthly mind to a mind according to the Cross of Christ that it is likened to death itself and resurrection, the passing from one world to another. It is so painful in many respects, there being always corrupt nature to subdue, and too often bad habits to root out, that he who sets about it must make up his mind to take up his cross daily: that is, to suffer something daily for his Saviour's sake. He must do what he would wish to leave undone, and leave undone what he would wish to do; must tear himself away from wrong pleasures, though evil custom may have made him feel as if he could not do without them; and must apply himself to irksome duties, in spite of a corrupt and indolent heart, which would fain persuade him he has done enough already. This must be done for Christ's sake; to please Him who has performed and suffered such unspeakable things for us, and with a thorough conviction that without Him, without His Holy Spirit assisting our weak endeavours, nothing of ours can be good, right, or holy. This is receiving the doctrine of the Cross into our heart and mind and practice. And how should the struggle be other than severe, when a soul, entangled with the world, and accustomed to please itself, right or wrong, endeavours to enter on such a path as this? And how should those lost

and miserable men, who determine to please themselves at any rate, and will not be weaned from their earthly mind; how should they be other than enemies and haters of that which so disturbs their false peace, and convicts them of being so much in the wrong?

Now, although I trust there are not many thus desperate and reckless in hatred of the Cross, it is a truth never to be forgotten, that the spirit which makes men such, the earthly minded, anti-Christian spirit, is, and is active, more or less, in all. The flesh, the carnal and wicked mind, which is enmity against God, exerts itself, as much as ever we will let it, against the Spirit, the good principle, which would teach the mind of Jesus Christ. In whatever measure men give way to this, whether in one sin or in another, as far as they set themselves against Christ, and become the enemies of His Cross; so far, as much as in them lies, they undo what He intended, when He shed His Blood for them. There are none so good, but they too often have occasion to lament this; for want of seriousness and diligence in prayer, the great concern of all is not so present to their recollection as it ought to be: their thoughts wander more than they need; they do and say too many things, by which others, who perhaps look up to them, are encouraged in what is wrong and unchristian, and are led to doubt whether there is any thing in religion, seeing, that those, who appeared to have so much of it, could allow themselves in such irreligious liberties.

But if occasional wanderings like these do so much harm to the good cause, what shall we say to that too ordinary case, in which the whole conduct of a Christian person is, and is known to be no better

than a mere minding of earthly things? S. Paul has told us in the text what such are; they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ; and how they come to be so, it has been now my endeavour to explain. It is a serious thought for us, every one. There is a war going on in the world, between the Cross of Christ and the powers of darkness: Satan, on the one side, trying to keep in subjection the lost souls of sinful men; the Cross of Christ, the one sufficient remedy, held up on the other side, by Almighty power and Infinite mercy, for all who are willing to lay hold of it. It is a warfare in which you cannot stand by, and take no part with either; it being expressly declared concerning it, "He that is not with Me is against Me, and he that gathereth not with Me scattereth."

Do not think, then, to go your own way, to please yourself and the world, to mind earthly things, and yet not to be against our Saviour. True it is, if you resolutely take His part, and humbly depend on Him for aid, you may very likely find the cost, even in this world, less than you expected. His good and gracious Spirit, given in answer to your fervent prayers, will smooth the way of duty for you, will make it practicable all along, and sooner or later, delightful too. But you must make up your mind to difficulties; you must not think much of enduring hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. Some pain and trouble you may have, in resisting the threats of ill-disposed men; still more, in disregarding their ridicule; and most and sharpest of all, in overcoming your own weak nature, and turning away from pleasant sins. Expect such things beforehand; prepare for them by prayer and good re-

solution; depend not at all on yourself, but on God's Holy Spirit to encounter them, and they need not overpower you when they come.

To conclude: If there be one thought above all others most apt to encourage and support a Christian in the severer parts of his earthly trial, it is surely the consideration, that, suffer what he will, if he suffer in the right spirit, for our Saviour's sake and to His glory, that divine Saviour Himself will reckon such a man as partaker of His sufferings, bearing His Cross after Him. Again: if there be any thing done in the Church which more than all other things should acquaint us with this best of comforts; any service which more than the rest would keep us close to our Saviour's Cross, it is the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper; the bread and wine which Himself appointed to convey to true penitent hearts the full blessing of His Death and Sacrifice. How is it that any Christian, knowing himself as he must to be liable to sin and misery, can wilfully refuse the treasure of spiritual strength? How is it that one who knows himself a sinner, should be careless of coming to our Redeemer for pardon? The explanation lies in two words: "They mind earthly things:" therefore in this, as in other respects, they behave themselves not as true believers, but as enemies of the Cross of Christ.

God grant that it be not so always: and as the best means of correcting so great an evil, may His grace be more and more thankfully received by those who have not yet forsaken His altar: and may their lives shine so brightly before men, that others seeing their good works, may be won to follow their good example, and glorify their Father which is in heaven.

SERMON XXXIV.

HOW TO RESIST THE TEMPTATION TO MIND EARTHLY THINGS.

TWENTY THIRD SUNDAY AFTER TRINITY.

PHIL. iii. 19.

"*Who mind earthly things.*"

MANY, when they read or hear such words as these, say in their hearts, if not openly in their words, 'Of course, men do mind earthly things, they are earthly beings, what else *should* they mind? They have bodies to be fed and clothed, families to be cared for, work to be done, goods to be looked after; they are made of flesh and blood, their place is in this world, and for this world they must care; all do care for it, whatever some may say.' And with that men turn good advice, even the words of our Lord Jesus away, and make light of Christ Himself, and go on very well pleased with themselves, living entirely for this world.

Many, I say, behave thus as a matter of course, but the Apostle seems surprised at it. "Many walk," he says, "of whom I have told you before, and now tell you even weeping, that they mind earthly things." That which moves us so little, or not at all, was to S. Paul a matter of tears; viz. that

God's people should go on losing their souls for the love of this world. He wept over them, as his Master before him had wept over impenitent Jerusalem. It was wonder as well as a grief to the Apostle, that any of his flock at Philippi should go on minding earthly things. Why did he wonder at them? Because they had come to be Christians, and surely knew better. They had heard of the Blessed Saviour, God made flesh: how He died for our sins, and what a heaven He hath prepared for us. They had heard one from another of the aweful miracle which was wrought in their town when S. Paul and Silas came at the first to preach there: how in the middle of the night, while the Christians in prison were praying, and singing praises unto God, suddenly there was a great earthquake, and the foundations of the prison were shaken, and all the doors were opened, and every one's bands were loosed. They had heard of these things, and had believed and turned to Christ; and how could they now go back, and be again taken up with earthly things?

Would not the Apostle if he were here, say much the same to many of us? Would he not say very likely with tears, 'Alas! what are you doing? You are Christians, born again in Christ, bred up within sound of His Gospel, members from your infancy of His holy Church, you know what your Lord has done and suffered for you, what acknowledgement He expects from you; you know what an aweful eternity is before you; and yet here you are minding earthly things: your whole hearts and souls and wishes and fancies as entirely taken up with this short unsatisfactory world, as if you were to stay in it for ever,

and had never been told of any thing higher or purer. What are all the Angels and blessed spirits in heaven, and good men upon earth who may know you, what are they all thinking of you?' Nay, what think you of your own self, in your better and more thoughtful moments—for better and more thoughtful moments to be sure you sometimes have? The great and glorious spirits that are round the throne of God and of the Lamb, when they come forth on their errands to the world to minister to them who are to be "heirs of salvation;" how strange must it be to them when they see men and Christians taking up with such poor trifles, such wretched impurities, instead of the good things to come. They, the good Angels know what heaven is, and what it is to see the Face of God there; they know the sound of the heavenly harpings, the Joy of their Lord, the good things which "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man." What pity and shame must it be in their eyes, when they look down to earth and see a Christian, who knows himself to have been called to all this, wilfully casting it all away, for a handful of money, or drop of drink, or some base pleasure that lasts but for a moment! You may judge what is thought of these ways in heaven, by seeing how good and pure persons think of them even here in this lower earth. Nay, and by your own thoughts and feelings concerning them: how lightly soever you may at all times talk of your own irreligious courses, and pretend to make a boast of them, yet in the bottom of your hearts you are ashamed of them; you know you are so, and you know that it makes you more

or less uneasy when you are seriously charged with them: there is something within which you cannot quite silence, telling you that you are in the wrong. In spite of yourself it will sometimes come over you, what a miserable thing it is to live without God in the world, and to depart into darkness.

Perhaps you try sometimes to satisfy yourself with the poor shallow thought, How can any man here know any thing of the world to come, which he never saw? But it will not do. Your own common sense will teach you something better than that; for you might as well say, How do I know that if I cross the seas I shall come to such and such a country where I never was in my life? How do I know, before I have tried, that such and such drugs will poison me if I take them, and such and such others, will do me good? Why, we know all these things by faith: faith in the person who has travelled; faith in the physician; and shall we not have faith in God, speaking to us by His own Son, and by His Apostles and prophets and evangelists, who have one after another, laid down their lives in testimony of these things, that we seeing what manner of love Jesus Christ hath bestowed upon us, might believe Him and love Him for ever? Oh, certainly our own hearts condemn us when we resist their teaching; the more, because we know also of another standing by, who eagerly watches for every opportunity of teaching us a lesson in his school of mischief, training us up to "an evil heart of unbelief." As he "sitteth lurking in the thievish corners of the streets," and puts enticing objects in men's way, trying to corrupt their thoughts and senses; so he

is often not far from them when they are reading or talking or listening, it may be on some religious subject; it may be within the very walls of the Church: when the sons of God, Christ's people, come there to present themselves before the Lord, Satan cometh very often among them, to see whether he can get them to indulge in profane thoughts on sacred matters, unholy behaviour in the holiest place. Does it not startle you sometimes, to think of this? that if your eyes were opened to see what is really there, you would discern the hideous countenance of that wicked one, close at hand, whispering unbelief or scorn or profaneness into your ear? To you perhaps it seems like a hint from your companions, or a passing thought that came of itself; but what if it should prove to be indeed that wicked one, permitted to come near and touch you, because you are not keeping watch over yourself, as you ought; you are not trying to pray or to hear in good earnest? You never can be sure concerning a bad thought, that it does not come even directly from him; you know certainly that indulging such thoughts is the way to bring him near you, if he were not there before; he scents them as it were at a distance, as a vulture does a dead carcase. O fear him, my brethren, fear that Evil one with a wise and holy fear and abhorrence: count every unbelieving fancy to be a token that he is at hand, and for your life's sake, for your precious soul's sake, say to him at once, 'Get thee behind me.' Quench the bad thought with something innocent or good, with a verse of a Psalm, or a short prayer, or the remembrance of our Lord on the Cross, or with a glance

onward to the great Day of Judgement; and most especially I beseech you, refrain from saying words such as you know the devil likes to hear: say no unbelieving words, lest he hear you and come closer to you, and find means to make your heart and mind unbelieving also.

Sometimes it may help you, when he would breathe his wretched profaneness into your hearts, to consider this very plain thought; that if it were as he would have you think, *if* there *were* no heaven or hell, still the good man would lose nothing; he will be no worse off than the wicked in the end: but if there be such places, as most assuredly there are, where will the unbeliever be then? It is as if you were travelling, and came to a place where two ways met, and being told on good authority that one of the two led down a precipice were careful to walk along the other: if there were no precipice, still you would be no loser; but if there were, and you despised the warning, your unbelief might bring you to a bad end.

But the best of all helps, when you would get the better of the worldly unbelieving mind, is to recollect that other and most blessed Presence which is always within call, always at hand, always around and within us; the Presence of Him Who is stronger than the strong man armed, and can at any time turn him out of his own palace, much more keep him from entering into ours. "Look unto Him, and be ye saved:" saved not only at last, in the end of all things, but also, on each special occasion here. When you look unto Him with real, believing prayer, when you think earnestly and trustfully of His Sign, the

holy Cross made on you in your Baptism, the devil is sure sooner or later to flee from you. Think of our Lord Christ present by His Spirit in your hearts, ready to receive your inward prayers, and present them to His Father. Think of Him, the same Christ in heaven, actually presenting these our prayers as He stands before His heavenly Father. Think that He has already purchased for us a conversation, a home, a citizen's place among those happy mansions: and that He will soon come again—such is His most loving promise—to take us to Himself, that where He is, there we may be also. Or as you heard in the Epistle, "From heaven we look for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious Body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto Himself." He will come, and He will come to us, to each one of His faithful people He will come as a Saviour, just as truly, just as entirely, just as effectually, as if that one were the only person to be saved by Him. O, look on to this: exercise yourself daily in the contemplation of the great Day, and of the heaven which will come after for those who shall be then found in Him. No other thought will more surely help you to leave off "minding worldly things."

Do not say, nor think, 'This heaven of which Holy Scripture speaks is altogether too high for us, too pure, too glorious; it will never do for such as we are, nor we for it.' Nay, my brethren, for here is another precious promise. When He cometh to fetch His own He "shall change our vile bodies." Yes: even your bodies and mine; vile, mean, cheap

as they are by nature, for we had ours from Adam, and Adam had his from the dust of the earth, and made it vile; altered it greatly for the worse by sin; I say, even these mean weak ordinary bodies He will in a marvellous manner, change, renew, glorify, after His own image, and take them up with Him to heaven. So that even he among you all, who is most taken up with the care of his mortal body, had need lead a Christian life for that very body's sake. Especially we have need to keep ourselves by His grace from the sins which most easily corrupt and debase the body. If we die in those sins, Christ's Body within us, the seed of our own blessed resurrection, has departed, or will only continue, like what men receive in the Blessed Sacrament, to their condemnation, not to their blessing. Keep, or purge yourselves from these sins, my brethren, and then fear not, but that He Who raised Himself from the dead, and ascended with His spiritual Body into heaven, will provide you also with a spiritual body of your own, with which you will be caught up, with all holy persons, "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air."

O then brethren, "lift up your hearts!" lift them up, I say, to the Lord. Why will you keep lingering on the earth? why throw yourselves away? why make a god of your belly, of your mere earthly sensual appetite, and so prepare yourself for no other end than destruction? You want, of course, to be happy, you do not *desire* to be miserable for ever. Now do you really doubt whether the blessed saints and Angels, who are with Christ in heaven, are happy or no? Do you doubt whether the devil and his

angels are miserable? You do not doubt it. Have sense then: have courage: live according to this faith, by that help which you may surely find in fervent prayer and Holy Communion. In a very short time, you will be on your death-bed: then, (if you have kept these sayings) you will find yourself, please God, in paradise; and a little after, when Christ hath come to judge us, in heaven, there to see His Face for ever. How strange, if we remember it, will it then appear to us, that we should ever have chosen the worse part! How shall we overflow with joy and thanksgiving to Him, by Whom and in Whom alone, any of us could have chosen the better, and continued in it!

SERMON XXXV.

GOD'S FAMILY, A SCHOOL OF GOOD WORKS.

SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

TITUS ii. 13, 14.

"The great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ, Who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

As the Church draws nearer and nearer to Advent, the solemn season which she has set apart for meditation on Christ's second Coming, she becomes more and more earnest in pressing on every Christian soul the absolute necessity of good works. She would have the thought of a terrible judgement to come, we know not how soon, she would have this thought sink deep in all our hearts, and set us on preparing ourselves in good earnest, by hearty amendment while we are yet on our trial. For it will be too late to repent, and promise improvement, just as the sentence is going to be passed. Like a kind considerate guardian, therefore, the Church warns you to get ready, that you may not be ashamed before Him at His coming.

And in to-day's collect, more especially she presses upon us immediate repentance, in consideration of

what you owe to her. She speaks to you, and teaches you to pray, as one of God's own faithful people. She bids you recollect, that as a Christian you are a member of a holy society, a body of men chosen out of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, expressly for the purpose of serving Him in all good and devout works. "We are His people and the sheep of His pasture," His own household, His children and servants. A Christian, by God's ordinance, is no longer allowed to consider himself as standing alone in the world, but as one among many in a holy family. And this puts all his duties in a peculiar point of view, not always regarded as it ought to be, even by serious and well-meaning men.

This piece of instruction is conveyed in the text by the words "peculiar people." The title was at first applied to the holy seed, the children of Israel, when God had redeemed them to Himself by bringing them out of the land of Egypt. He gathered them together round Mount Sinai, and declared from heaven that He had chosen them out of all the kingdoms of the world, to be a "peculiar treasure" to Him: "a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation." The Holy Spirit, by S. Peter, has taken up the expression, and applied it to all Christians. "[a] Ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of Him Who hath called you out of darkness into His marvellous light." And here we find S. Paul, in a letter of most serious advice and exhortation to one whom he had ordained to be a Christian Bishop, giving no other account of the

[a] 1 S. Pet. ii. 9.

very purpose of our Blessed Saviour in being made Man and dying for us: He "gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works."

The natural condition of all mankind is no better, you see, than a slavery, out of which we needed to be bought and redeemed, before we could be capable of the mighty blessings which God in His mercy had prepared for us: just as the Jews needed deliverance from Egypt, before they could be brought into Canaan. This slavery, the whole world, both Jew and Gentile, were continually making worse, by the bad habits in which they indulged, and the power which they allowed evil spirits to gain over them. To use the expression of the holy Apostle, the world was "carnal, sold under sin." And it was quite impossible, and out of the question, that men should do any thing for their own deliverance.

But what sinners could not do for themselves, the eternal and ever-Blessed Son of God graciously undertook to do for them: and that at the cost of His own precious Blood. "He gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us", not, observe, from the *punishment* of sin only, but also from the *habit* and *temper* of sin. Christ died to redeem the sinner from those chains of evil custom, which have wound themselves so round him by length of time, that he feels as if shaking them off would be losing a part of himself. Christ died to redeem the drunkard from his drunkenness, the impure from his debauchery, the unkind from his malice, the godless and careless man from his love of this present world. All

these and all other sins, with which in time past men's consciences have been stained, the Almighty Father is willing to pardon, for His dear and only Son's sake: and for His sake also in the time to come, He offers to all who truly repent the heavenly assistance of the Holy Spirit, to keep them from their old sins, and make them go on in such good works as He has promised to reward in heaven. Thus our Blessed Lord on His Cross is made unto us complete Redemption, both from the power and punishment of sin.

Observe now, to what purpose the Son thus made us free. Not to leave us in such a condition as many seem to delight in imagining, the moment they hear of freedom and liberty; not to turn us out into the world, loose and independent of all restraint but to make us more dependent on Him, more closely confined within His laws, for every day and hour that we live as Christians. If you listen to your natural blind notions, they will represent it as a noble and desirable thing to have one's own way in all things, to please one's self without asking any one's leave: but look into the Word of God, seek the true meaning of the death of Christ, and you will learn a very different lesson. God's service, you will learn, is perfect freedom: the way to have your own will is to resign yourself up to the Almighty, and try to have no will but His. This lesson, learned perfectly, is the temper of blessed spirits in heaven. And in such measure as you, by the grace of God crowning your prayers and hearty endeavours, are enabled to have this mind, so far your life even here on earth will be indeed holy and

heavenly. So far, having been, by the Cross of your Saviour, "delivered out of the hands of your enemies," the world, the flesh, and the devil, you will serve Him, as He invites you, "without fear, in holiness and righteousness before Him, all the days of your life."

In a word, the peculiar, chosen people, whom Christ vouchsafed to redeem to Himself, were meant, above all things in the world, to be always "zealous of good works;" not only rather good than evil, such as might pass well enough in the world, but "zealous," eager, earnest in good; every man striving and trying to be better every day than he was yesterday. And this is what our collect means by "plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works," and what is there proposed as the only way for us to be at last "plenteously rewarded" of God.

And in order that each particular Christian might answer the better this intention of our gracious Redeemer, He has not left us to stand, as it were, separate and apart from one another, but has appointed that all who believe in Him should make up one people, one household, one body; should feel a deep interest one in another, as if their welfare were bound up together: so that "whether one member suffer, all the members should suffer with it; or whether one member be honoured, all the members should rejoice with it." The whole plan of the Christian Church is, in short, as entirely opposite to the natural pride and self-sufficiency of man, as any thing can well be imagined. It will not let you for a moment dream that you can stand alone, and be independent.

This, as well as the Church's constant purpose of keeping you steady and zealous in good works, will appear more and more evidently, the more you consider, one by one, the methods of God in providing for that His family; the way by which He admitted you into it, the way by which He maintains you in it, the government set by Him over His Church, the privileges offered to obedient members of the family, and the punishments in store for the froward and wicked.

As to the way in which it has pleased God to admit men into His household, the Church, it is, as you know, by having them baptized with water in the name of the Holy Trinity: to which baptism His providence called you, being yet helpless children; and thus taught you, at the very beginning, how vain it is to depend on one's self, since this first step of all, which put you in a way towards happiness, had to be made for you entirely by others. The charity of parents, of sponsors, of ministers, and of the whole Church of God, helped to introduce you to these blessings. You never could have attained them alone.

And when you were so introduced, care was taken to pledge and bind you, as far as an infant could be pledged and bound, to every kind of good work. Think seriously of that promise, "To keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of your life:" that is, in other words, to take God's will and word for your rule, to resign yourself to Him as to your best friend, and make it the business of your life to please Him.

If any be tempted to the irreligious fancy of say-

ing, 'they never made the promise; others made it in their name, and they cannot be bound by it;' certainly it is in their power, if they will, to disavow and break their word given to God: but let them remember, that at the same time they cast away all the privileges of their Christian calling. They can no longer plead God's promise to be their God, to help them with His grace in answer to their earnest prayers. Refusing to be bound by the covenant of their baptism, they refuse to be members of Christ, children of God, and inheritors of the kingdom of heaven; they make themselves, as far as they can, such as the unbaptized heathen were, "having no hope, and without God in the world." In a word, the agreement must be taken, all or none: you cannot suppose yourself at liberty to choose which part you will keep, and which not; you cannot expect the privileges of God's household, if you will not try to perform your part of its duties.

If all this be clear on considering the first Sacrament, by which our Saviour admitted us into His family, it is still plainer, when we pass on to the second, by which He maintains and feeds us from time to time; like a kind father providing for his children that nourishment which they most need. Immediate communion with Jesus Christ, His own blessed Body and Blood, is the true support and sustenance of faithful souls; and this is what no man can provide for himself; the mercy of God provides it for him in the Church, by the hands of His chosen ministers. God requires you to come, meekly and humbly, renouncing all claims of your own; not pretending to be any thing by yourself, but resting all

your hope altogether upon your being one of Christ's holy household; a member of His Divine Body, deriving grace and merit from Him. By the very act of coming to the Holy Communion, you renounce, before God and man, that proud unchristian notion of standing alone, being independent. You profess yourself to stand in continual need of all the means and instruments of grace; the prayers, the intercession, the good example, of your brethren; all the helps which the Son of God has so graciously provided in His Church and household.

Thus you see how the Holy Communion, the appointed sign and daily conveyance of spiritual nourishment in the Church of God, you see how this Sacrament tends to cure men of their proud imaginary freedom, and make them feel how far they depend, by Christ's ordinance, upon His Church. And surely, as to zeal in good works, every one who thinks at all on the subject, knows that one chief purpose of the Holy Communion was to encourage and strengthen men in *that*. On that very account it is, that so many Christian men and women shrink back from the Lord's Altar, because they know that worthy communicants endeavour to be zealous of good works; and to such zeal, such endeavour, they have not yet made up their minds; they had rather try a little longer, whether they may not do well enough by refraining outwardly from gross sins, and being about as good as their neighbours. They must be plainly told, over and over, that what keeps them from being communicants now, would have kept them from being Christians at all, if they had lived in the days of the Apostles. For, as you hear, S. Paul

would then have told them, that the purpose of God in calling them to be Christians was, that they might be earnest in good works; the very thing which alarms them, and which they plead for their backwardness, when they are invited to the Communion now.

For, indeed, such an assemblage of reasons for holiness of life, as that Blessed Sacrament presents, cannot be found any where else. The Son of God, dying for your pardon, the Spirit of God coming down to be your help, your own promises, and vows, and oaths, so solemnly repeated in the more immediate presence of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; all this brought home to your very senses by the sight and touch of the holy elements, left by our Saviour to be pledges of Himself, to be, in effect and virtue, His own Body and Blood; must needs make a serious impression on every heart capable of seriousness, and dispose it to serve Christ truly for the future; and besides all, and to ensure all, there is the secret invisible aid of God's Holy Spirit, which, dwelling without measure in the Man Christ Jesus, fails not to be communicated more and more to all who worthily partake of that Bread and Cup. It is, as it were, a strengthening medicine, left to Christ's peculiar people, the Church, in order that they may be helped more plenteously to bring forth the fruit of good works.

Are you then weak in any part of your duty? Come to that holy Feast with a sincere will and desire to be stronger, and you will by degrees be strengthened. But the truth is, too many of us, well-knowing where they are spiritually feeble, do

not care to be made strong and sound. They had rather, in fact, continue weak, in order to have a sort of excuse for some wrong indulgence or evil passion. They decline God's bread, from a childish notion, that so they may be excused from doing God's work.

But the Almighty will not so be mocked, nor so permit His own peculiar people to make void His purpose in purifying them to Himself. And lest the two Sacraments alone should fail in reminding them of that purpose, He has also condescended, as a careful Master, to appoint persons under Him in His household; ministers of His holy word and Sacraments, having power and commandment from Him, on the one hand, to remind obstinate sinners that such and such things *are* sins, and that God has passed sentence on them in heaven; on the other, to declare and pronounce to the penitent the absolution and remission of all their sins. The Apostles had, united to this, power to strike certain great and open sinners with sickness or other temporal punishment; to deliver them for a while to an evil spirit for the hurt of the flesh, that the soul might be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. And both the Apostles, and their successors the Bishops, used to turn men out of the Church, when their offences were notorious and open, shutting them, by public sentence, out of the solemn assemblies of Christians, from hearing God's word, praying with their brethren, and especially from receiving Christ's sacred Body and Blood. This is called by our Church, in the Commination Service, "a godly discipline," and she greatly wishes it might be restored among us; which happy return

to the practice of the better times we may (if ever) *then* hope to see, when Christians in general shall have learned more humility and modesty, and be willing to trust themselves to the Church of Christ, instead of presumptuously seeking out each his own way of salvation.

I say, when men are spiritually more humble, we may hope to see "godly discipline" revived, sinners turned out of the Church, and openly humbling themselves before God: but until then we must wait with patience. This use, at any rate, we may make of what we read in the Scriptures concerning the discipline of the early Church; it may serve as one instance more of the stress laid on good works by Him Who enacted those laws for His people, our Lord and Saviour Christ Himself. He it was Who declared to His Apostles, and through them to all Bishops of His flock, "Whose sins ye remit, they are remitted, and whose sins ye retain, they are retained:" and His Spirit instructed them to use that power in excluding great and open sinners from the Church. Could there be a clearer sign of the will and desire of Christ our King to have His Church without spot or blemish, "plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works?" And since He is still the same Christ, ruling in His household by the same Spirit, although unhappily the same outward discipline cannot at once be revived among us, still those who wish always to please their Lord, may do well to bear that discipline in mind, and order some parts of their conduct by it.

For example: one rule of that ancient discipline, was, "[b] If any man that is called a Christian be a for-

[b] 1 Cor. v. 11.

nicator, or a defrauder, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner, with such an one, no not to eat;" to avoid his company, and shew him that you did so, on indifferent and ordinary occasions. Would it not be true Christian charity, if some of us would act on this rule a little more conscientiously than the world would teach us to do; treating those persons, who are notoriously guilty of what God has condemned, however usual; treating them I say, with a kind of reserve, as though they were already excommunicated; as, no doubt, they are in heaven? I say, this would be the truest charity, because it would give these unfortunate persons one chance more of repentance and amendment, as often as they saw Christian people, otherwise kind and gentle, shrinking from them on account of their sins. Whereas, if, amid all their notorious guilt, they find themselves yet welcome companions even to such as profess to fear God, what can they possibly imagine but this, That good men, in their hearts, do not believe *all* that is said of the terrible consequences of such sins? And what effect can that have, but to embolden the sinner in his desperate course, and cause him, contrary to all our prayers, and contrary to all the will of our Redeemer, plenteously to bring forth the fruit of *evil* works?

Even out of charity, therefore, to the sinner, Christians are bound in their ordinary dealings to mark and avoid profligate men; and if they would do so, not in party spirit, but thoughtfully and seriously, for conscience sake, they would be so far forwarding, each in his place, the purpose of their Saviour in giving Himself for them. They would be

doing what little they can towards purifying the Church of God, and making it zealous of good works.

Only let it always be remembered, that little blessing can be expected on this or any other effort, which any man may make for the salvation of others, except he watch, in the first place, for his own. There let your Christian zeal begin, in rooting out bad habits, and quieting rude and violent passions; let that work go hand in hand with a charitable zeal to make other men better also, and both, by God's blessing, will be well done. A mind so disposed will go on, silently and gradually, from year to year, bringing forth the fruit of good works, till, in His own good time, He Who inspired it will plenteously reward it.

SERMON XXXVI.

ACCOUNT TO BE GIVEN OF CHURCH PRIVILEGES.

SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

S. JOHN XV. 22.

"If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin."

WE are so used to have the means of grace continually (as we think) within our reach, that most of us, I fear, have come to consider them quite as a settled thing, a matter of course. It does not come into our minds, that we owe any particular thanks to the Almighty for casting our lot where we may have so rich blessings from the Gospel and Church of Christ; for giving us, not only the Bible, but the Prayer-book too. We seldom or never recollect and examine ourselves, whether we be not loading ourselves with a heavy burthen against the last Day, every year, month, and week of our lives, by the little use we make of the Prayer-book in particular.

In order to help Christian men in understanding their own guiltiness in this respect, Scripture has been very full in setting forth the inexcusable guilt of those Jews who lived when our Saviour came, and

threw away that great privilege of having Him personally among them. Let us suppose any one of these, the year before our Lord's ministrations began: suppose a man in those times, living in the same careless way that the generality of people in all times seem to prefer, not indeed rejecting his Creator altogether, but paying Him very slight attention, praying seldom and very carelessly, and taking no pains to pray better; indulging and humouring himself daily, with little thought of another world, little restraint from the known will of God. And suppose that some devout person, coming to such an earthly-minded Jew, in order to advise him better, had been enabled to tell him beforehand of the wonderful manifestation, which God was preparing to make of His eternal judgement and mercy, by His Son Jesus Christ; suppose it had been said, 'You are now at ease in your sins, but what will be your thoughts when the Most High God shall begin to do wondrously in your sight; when a Divine Instructor shall appear, and raise the dead, and open the eyes of the blind, and feed thousands with a few loaves and fishes, and shew by all the other miracles of which the old prophets have spoken, that He is indeed the promised Son of God? Shall you be able to keep up your profane indifference, when He tells you of another world, and when He proves His words true by calling the dead out of their graves?'

Suppose these questions put to a careless irreligious Israelite, there can be no doubt what his answer would have been. He would have said, 'Shew me such signs as those, and of course I must and shall be convinced.' But when the signs were really

wrought, what was their effect on the generality? We know too certainly that they did not and would not believe: they listened eagerly to the crafty inventions of their Scribes and Pharisees. Instead of repenting, they cried out, "Crucify Him." So unlike was their conduct to what themselves would have expected beforehand. Christ came and spake unto them, He shewed them the signs themselves demanded, and so left them without any cloke for their sin.

By this we see, when people have gone on long in forgetfulness of God, how very much worse they become than they know themselves. They bring themselves to such a habit of unbelief, that miracles, doctrine, every thing, is lost upon them. Those very means of grace, which they would have thought themselves beforehand sure to be converted by, fail to do them any good.

Let us take another example, nearer to our own experience. Suppose any thoughtful person, who had been all his life long kept at a distance from Christian privileges and means of grace, to be somehow or other made acquainted with the provision made in this country, for bringing men to repentance and salvation. Suppose him informed for the first time, that if he would come and live among us, he would find such places as our churches provided, such services as those in our Prayer-book appointed, and such an order of persons as our Bishops and pastors ordained, on purpose to keep up a continual communication between repenting sinners and their pardoning God: what would he expect to find, when he came to live in a land so favoured? Would

he not say to himself, 'Surely among this people I may hope to find the words of the prophet accomplished, by whom God, speaking of the glorified Church, says, "[a] My people shall be all righteous?"' If any person, naturally, would look beforehand for some such thorough reformation among men so privileged as we are, then we may judge of our own degeneracy and wickedness, whose conduct is so very far from coming up to such expectations.

To put the case still more particularly: imagine for a moment that the order of Common prayer and Sacraments, such as we have it in our own Prayer-book, had only just been contrived and adopted by the Church: that we had gone on hitherto without any such help, every man being left to make out the Scriptures by himself, and serve God as he might judge best. Imagine that the order of the Sunday services, such as will begin afresh next Sunday, and go round to Advent in next year, were now to be tried for the first time: I think one may say, quite positively, that any serious sensible person, who should look through the services prepared, would naturally look for a great improvement, a material amendment in the hearts and lives of Christians, by the time these services should have gone through one or two years.

For, first of all, on opening the Prayer-book, he would see that a daily service was provided: an Order for Morning and Evening Prayers, not for Sundays and great days only, but for every day throughout the year. Here then, he would say, is a Church and nation, in which that common error will be cured,

[a] Is. lx. 21.

of considering religion, and the worship of God, as a duty for Sundays only. Here we may expect to find people honouring the Sunday indeed beyond all days, and keeping it, by a holy rest, as the appointed feast of our Lord's Resurrection, but yet not forgetful of God and His Church on other days: a people ready to own and remember, that however important and pressing their week-day cares and duties may be, they cannot be so important and pressing as to justify them in neglecting their God: who therefore will earnestly endeavour to serve God in His Church, not on Sundays only, but as often as ever that Church is open: will wish and try to be there, and be sorry when they cannot.

This, I say, is one of the not unreasonable expectations which may enter into a thoughtful stranger's mind, on reading our Prayer-book over for the first time. How would he be surprised and disappointed, when he came to know the real state of the case! when he found that in a country so highly favoured, such was the general lukewarmness and irreligion, that the churches in most places were only open on Sundays, and then very partially attended; attended in such a way, as too plainly shews that men think more of entertaining themselves, by hearing some new word of man, than of strengthening and refreshing their souls, by joining in the Church's prayer to her God!

In the same way, each part of the Prayer-book, compared with the lives of those who use it, or might use it, would seem to bring a grievous accusation against them. Look at our confession of sins, renewed every morning and evening. Will it not

stand as against us in God's Book, that with such a remembrancer continually sounding in our ears, we should yet have so little thought of our lost and miserable condition by sin, so little care to secure God's pardon by a godly, righteous, and sober life? Look again at the absolution: can any man say that he wants encouragement to draw near his Saviour in humble penitence, when he hears, or may hear, so very often those gracious words, "He pardoneth and absolveth all them that truly repent, and unfeignedly believe His holy Gospel?" Look at the prayers, consider them fairly, and judge whether those persons *can* be excusable who, being taught by God's own Apostolical Church such pure and heavenly and devout ways of addressing Him, still continue at a distance from Him.

Look at the glorious psalms and hymns, using which we praise God often in the very words of the Holy Ghost, always in the words of the saints and martyrs of old. Whose fault must it be, if in the congregation where such anthems are heard, worldly, discontented imaginations still prevail? Who is to blame, but your own wilful spirit, if when you might have formed yourself to a holy resignation and thankfulness by constant using of the psalms of David, the man after God's own heart, you still remain a fretful, moody complainer?

Look at the Creeds of the Holy Catholic Church, and be sure that she is not to blame, if her children, having such guidance from her, go seriously wrong in the interpretation of holy Scripture. Look at the order taken for instruction in God's word: no person allowed to preach, or to perform any other holy

office, without the warrant of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, conveyed to the minister, by the laying on of the hands of the Bishops, the successors of His Apostles: holy lessons regularly taken out of the Old Testament and out of the New, till the whole counsel of God has been declared in the words of His own Divine Spirit: the sermon itself, in our Church, for more solemnity, made a part of the Communion Service, and every thing about it so ordered as to shew the wish of the Church, that it should not be like a bare word from man, but rather, as it were, the unfolding of God's word by His own undoubted warrant and authority.

Again, suppose any rightly thinking person to have been living where the holy Sacraments of Christ, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord, were slighted and made little of, would he not accept the services in our Prayer-book as a great security provided by the Church against such a dangerous and profane error? When he found what care is taken to have young children brought to their Saviour, without any loss of time, to leave them, being so brought, in no doubt of their Christian privileges, to furnish them with full instruction in their duty, and sureties to see that they learn it all, to bring them in due time before the Bishop, that by laying on of his hands they may receive more and more of God's Holy Spirit: when a man came for the first time to know of all these charitable precautions, used by the Church to bring all her children to heaven, he would surely expect to find children brought to Baptism with a deep and devout sense of the inestimable blessing there prepared for them; taught

their Catechism, not as a mere school task, but as a part of the solemn service of God, not only to be repeated, but to be practised: anxious to be confirmed, and diligent in preparing themselves for it. All this one might hope to see not in five or six only, such as one may look for even in a heathen country where the Gospel is never preached at all, but in the general body of the congregation.

When he came to find it otherwise, when he came to know of Baptism being slighted by many, as though it were no great spiritual good; of godfathers looking on their duty as a mere compliment, or matter of course; of people's making haste to forget their catechism, and caring very little for Confirmation: when he came to know of these things, he would, I should expect, say to himself, 'Wherever the fault of all this lies, the Church, at least, is not to blame for it: *she* has done her duty. It may be her ministers' neglect, or it may be her people's stubbornness, or it may be some of the one and some of the other: but the Church herself is free of all blame: and a heavy account they will have to give, who live in hearing of her plain grave instructions, and behave as if she had never spoken a word to them.'

The same, again, would be his course of thought, when he came to consider the other blessed Sacrament, and to compare Church laws and Church services regarding it with the ordinary behaviour of Churchmen. If any go on profanely rejecting the Holy Communion altogether, the Church, he would perceive, is not to blame for it, who has not only enjoined all her children to communicate at least three times a year, but also encourages, wherever it

may be, Communion on every Lord's day; and to put us in mind of that sacred duty, appoints certain portions of the holy service to be said at the Lord's Table, even when the Sacrament is not administered.

If any come to that aweful Table with hearts unclean and unprepared, it is not for want of being warned by the Church what extreme peril they run into thereby. If any come with less reverence than they ought, accounting that holy Feast a mere remembrance of our Lord's sufferings, and not the very partaking, spiritually, of His Body and Blood offered for us, the Church in her whole service corrects his error, teaching over and over that we there receive verily and indeed the Body and Blood of Christ.

And so in all other the most material points of faith and practice. Any one who should consider them one by one, first in the Prayer-book and afterwards in the practice of Christians, must needs confess that what is corrupt among us is our own fault, and not the fault of our Church.

And when we find such wholesome laws, such sacred and heavenly services neglected, what must we naturally look for in the other parts of the same person's life and conduct? Surely we must make up our minds to see great want of seriousness and devotion, great neglect of eternal things; irregularity in every kind of duty; much dissolute and covetous conduct; discontent, murmuring, disloyalty of every kind; contempt of parents, disobedience to magistrates, irreverence to pastors, presumption towards God Himself. And what must we expect in the end thereof? What sort of a countenance, think

you, shall we appear with at the last day, when the Great King will come to demand an account of all our talents, and especially of these, our Church privileges? How, I say, shall we look upon Him, who have for this and so many past years possessed in such abundance the means of grace, and have turned them into means of sin? The Judge Himself has given us some insight into the proceedings of that fearful day, so far as regards impenitent and slothful Christians. "Many will come to Me in that day, saying, We have eaten and drunk in Thy presence, and Thou hast taught in our streets: and then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity." Alas! if any persons in the world stand in danger of this sentence, surely it is they who live among the Church services, and yet continue profane and indevout, and go on in the ordinary way of the world.

If there be any such here: any whose conscience charges him with being no truer a penitent, no nearer his God now than he was a twelvemonth ago, when we last finished the course of Sunday Services, and turned back to Advent again; as he cannot but feel in his heart that the blame rests not with the Church, but with himself, so he may understand that the remedy also, by God's grace, depends upon himself, and it is not too late. The Almighty, by sparing you to another Advent, gives you clearly and distinctly to know, that He will yet accept and pardon you, if you will yet turn to Him, and begin at last to make the right use of these inestimable privileges. He will presently begin to warn you again, by the course of Sunday lessons and collects, of His speedy

coming in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead. He will then assure you, week after week, of His Son's unspeakable condescension in taking our nature upon Him, and doing and suffering all for us, even to the death of the Cross. By the Easter and Whitsuntide Services, He will afterwards teach you how to glorify Him Who died for you, and now reigns over you; and how to submit yourselves to His gracious Spirit, come down in His absence, to bring you nearer and nearer to Him. Then by the course of the Services after Trinity Sunday, even to this time next year (should it please Him that any of us live so long) He will instruct you what fruit of good works He expects of those who have been so highly favoured. It rests with yourselves, my Christian brethren, to resolve whether this course of Divine instruction shall pass away, unimproved by you, and you remain as barren as in other seasons, or no. But be assured of this, that you cannot remain where you are. Every day that you do not mend, with such helps to amendment offered you, in the sight of God you become worse.

Above all, beware of neglecting these blessings out of the foolish and profane notion (the ruin, alas! of too many) that they are always within your reach that you may avail yourselves of them to repent, when you will. You cannot insure your life or your reason for one hour; how then can you reckon on any future repentance? The great Advent is coming on; your time is short, your work exceeding hard; a day lost may be the loss of Eternity. One way only is safe; "Behold now is the accepted time: behold now is the day of salvation."

SERMON XXXVII.

SELF-EXAMINATION BEFORE ADVENT.

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

S. MATT. xiii. 44.

"*The kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field: the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.*"

SOME of our Lord's parables about the kingdom of heaven are also a kind of prophecies, giving an account of things as they really are; not such as He would have them to be, but such as the folly and wickedness of evil men and evil spirits has made them. Such an one is the parable of the tares, where He describes mischievous weeds growing up with the good seed in the field of the great householder; or of the net that gathered of every kind, some sound, and some corrupt; or of the feast at which both bad and good were assembled, and out of which one was turned for not having on a wedding garment. Other parables are such as to describe only God's gracious purpose with the Church, taking no notice of the sad effects which the sins of men

have, making in a manner that merciful purpose void. Such seems to be the famous parable or vision, whereof we read in the Revelation of S. John, of the Church appearing as the Bride, or the Lamb's Wife, all pure and bright, and nothing at all that defileth permitted to come within her walls. It describes her as God intended she should be, such as she will be after the last great Day. But as yet the wickedness of men on earth has hindered her from being such in our sight.

Parables being of these two kinds, it is easy to see to which of the two kinds this parable of the hidden treasure belongs; as also that of the pearl, which immediately follows it. "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth it, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchantman, seeking goodly pearls; who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it." Both these parables tell us, not what the generality of men do, but what God would have them do, what it is natural and right they should do. They tell us how foolish the man is, in the eyes of Christ and His saints and Angels, who cares for anything in this world in comparison with eternal life. It supposes a person to have as much common sense in the great matter of eternal salvation, as all persons, even the simplest, have in respect of worldly goods, and then tells us what he will do. We know very well, any of us, what any ordinary man would do if he knew of a treasure hid in a field, supposing he had no

reason to think it belonged to any person in particular. We should not make a boast of it, but rather hide it, in order that none might rob us of any part of it. We should think very much of it: at least most persons would: it would be a real and great joy to them. If it were a large sum, and we worth very little, we should think ourselves too happy to be allowed to part with our all to obtain it. But what is the largest sum, the richest treasure, compared with everlasting life? All that this world can give, set against the least share of the joy of the saints in the world to come, is not so much as the smallest piece of money compared with the richest treasure. A person would be accounted beside himself, were he to refuse the offer of a field which he knew had a great treasure hidden in it, because his mind was set upon some other field, in which he thought there was a chance of his finding some coin of mean value; but what is this to the folly and madness of passing by the offer of the kingdom of heaven for some sinful pleasure which lasts but for a moment; selling your birthright for a morsel of meat?

However, in the parables of the treasure, and the pearl, our Lord does not speak of such miserable destroyers of themselves, but rather describes the way of His true servants; such as know their own good and really and earnestly seek it. And these are in two sorts of circumstances answering to the two parables of the treasure and the pearl. The man who found the treasure, came upon it suddenly; he had no reason to expect anything in that field; he was just passing through, and there the treasure

was. But the merchantman in the other parable was seeking goodly pearls. He was going about among the jewellers' shops with his eyes open, and his mind turned that way. He knew something of what he had need of, and was most actively and seriously looking for it. We see the same kind of difference in different persons' manner of entering on the blessings of God's kingdom. Some are admitted to it before they are aware, without any thought or purpose of their own, being indeed too young to have any thought or purpose at all. Such are all those who are by God's providence baptized, and made members of Christ in their infancy. They are, as our Lord speaks in another parable, compelled to come in; are made Christians without any leave of their own; the treasure is thrown in their way, before they can possibly think of desiring it. But there are others, unlike these, who having grown up out of Christ's Church, feel that something is wanting to their happiness; that God means them some better thing than any which they have yet found; that they are not yet quite in the right way, but have to feel after it, and find it: such as were the grown up Jews and heathens, to whom our Lord and His Apostles preached: S. Mary Magdalene; the centurion Cornelius; Nicodemus; Sergius Paulus; and in general all those, who in all ages of Christianity have been converted, being grown up. These are like persons seeking goodly pearls; they know, they feel in their hearts that there are precious blessings in the world, ways of happiness beyond what they have yet found, and that they are not to be obtained except by God's special blessing

on their sincere endeavours to love Him and to do what they know to be right. Cornelius was such an enquirer; he was a devout man according to his knowledge, and served God with all his house, in fastings, prayers, and alms continually: and God rewarded him by sending His Angel, who guided him to S. Peter, and from him he received Holy Baptism, and was made a member of Christ, a child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Great indeed was his blessing; but not less favoured surely are they, to whom without any endeavour of their own our Saviour gives a place in His kingdom; and this is, generally speaking, our condition, born as we were of Christian parents, and baptized in our infancy into the holy Church. The kingdom of heaven came to us unsought, like a treasure in a field: we had not to grow up without it, and go about painfully and doubtfully seeking for it. If we had been brought up heathens or Jews, and the Almighty by some wonderful providence had brought us to the clear light and true knowledge of Him and of His Son Jesus Christ, should we ever have forgotten that great change? Should we not have thought very much of it? Would it not have given a kind of colour or tinge to all our serious thoughts and prayers? Why have we not the same thoughts of it now? What a shame, what a misery, what a wonder, that we whom the Saviour of the world has long ago gathered under His wings should be spending our time from morning to night in any thing rather than in His service and in His kingdom! that we should be sparingly measuring out our labour, our thoughts, our money, a little of each

now and then for Him Who gave us all, and more than all: Him Who spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for our sake.

The parables which describe our blessing, tell us plainly our duty also. The man that found the treasure hid it, and for joy at his discovery went and sold all that he had, and bought the field where it was. The merchantman having discovered one pearl, very precious, but not to be obtained without the sale of all that he had, staid not waiting and doubting, wishing to have the jewel, but shrinking from the cost: "he made haste and prolonged not the time;" he went away at once, sold all that he had, and became the owner of that pearl. So whoever would be Christ's disciple, must forsake all and follow Him. We see plainly what this means in the case of the newly-converted heathen or Jew: he must give up his old companions, his old habits, his old delights: many times he must offend and forsake father and mother, friends and kindred, must meet with scorn, loss, danger, perhaps death. But it is not so plain to us, how such as we are, we whom our Lord called from the beginning, we to whom He gave the kingdom at once, without our suffering anything at the time, how we should be called to purchase that kingdom with our all. Yet if we will consider a little, we may easily see that whatever mind Christ would require of us, had we now to be admitted into His kingdom for the first time, the same we ought to practise now, that we lose not our place in His kingdom. If love of the world and the things of the world would have kept us out of it, being heathen, surely it is no less certain, being

indulged, to drive us out of it, being Christians. As was the beginning, so must be the middle and the end; or rather each succeeding year should be better than the last. The beginning was a washing with water and the Holy Ghost; all the rest should be a school of purity. The Cross was then marked on our foreheads; let us joyfully bear it all our life long. We made our vow then: let us now and always be keeping it. Really, truly, this is our condition: whatever our many sins may have lost us in the way of privilege, we are in respect of our duty just as if we had this very hour come out of the holy Font, with the white garments of salvation newly put upon us, and the strict promises we made fresh upon our lips. What we renounced then, we ought to be renouncing now, renouncing daily more and more. "[a]I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:" this was S. Paul's understanding of his own condition, and ours ought to be the very same.

We cannot then do better than ask ourselves very seriously and often, 'How am I conforming myself to this great commandment? How far have I kept myself above worldly thoughts and desires? To what extent is my conversation in heaven, my mind set on the things above?' At this time let us particularly ask ourselves, over and over again, these serious questions; for this is a very serious time. It is the last Sunday after Trinity, the Advent season will commence next Saturday, and we turn back in our collects to the beginning of the Prayer-book again. God's providence, whether we will hear it or no, is even now sounding this lesson in our ears: that we

[a] Gal. ii. 20.

shall before very long be called to a particular account for our use of the Prayer-book during the last twelvemonth. The Almighty seems to say to us by the voice of His Church "Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith: prove your own selves: know ye not that Jesus Christ is in you except ye be reprobates?"

Let us examine ourselves, first of all, as to the use we have made, since last Advent, of the great Advent doctrine of a judgement to come. Next Sunday the Church reminds us in her collect, that as our Lord came once in great humility, so He will come again in His glorious Majesty to judge both the quick and the dead. She gave us the same warning a twelvemonth ago: will she find us now more obedient than we were then? Have we been endeavouring during these months, to keep up the remembrance of death and judgement, the sense of Christ's Presence, love of His goodness, and fear of displeasing Him, in all our ways, not now and then only? Such a course would no doubt be hard at first to flesh and blood. Besides the actual denying ourselves, and keeping away from things which we were perhaps used to, no person likes at first to be checked, be it for what reason it may, in his eager pursuits and pleasures, with the thought, How am I sure that God approves this? It damps, disturbs, interrupts, and therefore, if we be not careful, will vex us, and so we shall be tempted to let it go. Take, for example, any of those things which the world calls innocent enjoyments, and which are not in themselves guilty, but only so far as they entice us away from God, and make us selfish and hard-hearted. Suppose a rich man, or

any man at a feast: not intemperate, but merely enjoying himself: it would sound, perhaps, at the first, as a hard saying, were one to tell him to turn his mind often and often during the evening to the last great Feast, the wedding banquet, where those who are found unprepared shall be cast into outer darkness. To keep on continually with such thoughts, people say to themselves, would be spoiling all the cheerfulness and enjoyment of life: as well forsake and give up our pastimes at once, as bid us accompany and restrain them by thoughts such as these. So it is with our home enjoyments, the company of wives and children, brothers and sisters, dear friends and neighbours whom we trust: it is good to mix with them constantly, remembrance of the end: to say to ourselves continually, 'This will not be for ever: we must surely be parted in this world, and God only knows how soon.' It is good to go on reminding ourselves of this, otherwise our present enjoyments are apt to spoil us and make us worldly: it is good, but it is not in itself pleasant, and people draw back from it as though it would make life melancholy. This is the very trial of our faith; it is the same thing in a small way which the sufferings and trials of the Apostles and martyrs were in a large way. If we make up our minds to it, and boldly yet humbly enter on it in earnest, lifting up our hearts to Him Who calls to us from the Cross; then we do in our measure begin to take up our Cross: we may be said in a very true sense to sell all that we have for the hidden treasure, the pearl of great price. Not that we must of course outwardly and bodily part with the comforts which God vouchsafes to us in this life, but by

continually offering them up in this manner as a sacrifice to Him, even whilst we take them, we do in a manner part with them, and He by His good Spirit will keep our hearts prepared to part with them outwardly when He may call on us to do so.

The whole of the sacred services of every year, as they are marked out in the Prayer-book, is a course and succession of exercises in this great duty. The year, according to the Church, begins as you know with the season of Advent, which is a time of penitence and self-denial wherein we are to prepare ourselves for the Coming of the Lord. Did we keep it as such last year? Did we so meditate on the fearful sayings of Holy Scripture concerning the last Day, as to keep up the remembrance of that Day better than before in our ordinary sayings and doings? Have we been the more content, ever since, to be chastened and humbled in our earthly pursuits and pleasures, by the recollection which the Bible recommends to all young and high-spirited persons particularly: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth but remember that for all these things God will bring thee to judgement?"

Again, we shall do well to ask ourselves, How did we, during this year which is now drawing to an end, keep Lent, and the other times ordained by the Church for fasting? Our Lord distinctly gives us to understand, that fasting is a duty of the same sort as alms and prayer: that people must of course practise it, in some way or other, if they would go to heaven. How have we observed His direction, during this last twelvemonth? Have we made the kind of difference in our diet which the Church directs? Or have we gone on as if we thought we could be good

enough without it? Do not think this a matter of small consequence. I suppose that such as have tried discreetly and in earnest will tell you that there is hardly anything which has done them more spiritual good than attending to this duty of fasting: though there are difficulties often in first trying it, which make it particularly desirable to take advice of those whom God has set over us, concerning it.

One more question; very much of the meaning of the joyful services of the Church, especially the Whitsuntide services and those for Saints' days, is to make Christians feel that they are not alone in the world, that they are truly members of the Body of Jesus Christ, God Incarnate, crucified and risen again, and therefore that they are bound in all things to go out of themselves, and care for the whole body. Has this been our mind more and more, as we have kept one joyful day after another? Have we thought more of Jesus Christ, not only in ourselves but in our brethren? And have we feared more and more, accordingly, to do the least thing which might defile or hurt the least Christian?

These are some of the questions we ought to ask ourselves, now that Advent is again coming round: and no doubt the best of us will find in the answer of his conscience enough to humble him: while the worst, if he will not hide his eyes from it, may see tokens enough of God's merciful Will to bring him to repentance and salvation. May it please Him to cherish and settle in us, the beginnings of all good and contrite thoughts: that when Advent comes round again, if it find us still in this world, it may find us better Christians, and truer penitents, than we now are.

SERMON XXXVIII.

SELF-EXAMINATION BEFORE ADVENT CONCERNING OUR DEVOTIONS.

SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

1 THESS. v. 17, 18.

"*Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*"

IT seems natural at this time of the year, when we are guided by the Church's Prayer-book to begin our round of collects and services anew, that we should have some very serious thoughts of the manner in which we have spent our time since we were last at the same point. Particularly we seem called on to examine ourselves, How we have prayed. We are so many months longer in the professed habit of saying our prayers, we are also so much nearer the great Day, to which all prayers look on and which is to be the last end of all: how then can we help asking ourselves a few serious and anxious questions, as to the way in which we have improved this great duty and privilege of Prayer? We are to appear before the great King: have we practised ourselves as He invited us, in addressing Him? He hath made

us citizens of heaven: have we been exercising ourselves in the language of heaven?

We may judge of how great consequence these our devotional duties are by S. Paul's way of speaking in the text. "Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks, *for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.*" As if those two things, to pray without ceasing, and to give thanks in every thing, made up between them the whole will of God: so that if a man be right in these, nothing else could be seriously wrong.

To examine ourselves, then, in our prayers is to examine ourselves in the whole of our duty. Let us enter on it with fear and humility, as in His Presence, Who only knows for certain whether we are in earnest or no. Remembering that His eye is on our hearts, let us seriously ask ourselves the two questions which S. Paul in the text urges on his beloved converts, the Christians of Thessalonica. Have we, since we last began the collects, in any sense prayed without ceasing? Have we in every thing given thanks?

As to the first question, Whether we have prayed without ceasing, too many there are, of whom we must sadly confess, that such a question seems quite out of place to them: rather may they ask themselves, whether they have prayed at all? For prayer is speaking to Almighty God, asking Him for what you want: and God is spoken to with the heart and mind, and not with the lips only. If then we have habitually and usually allowed ourselves to say the words of our prayers without trying to mind them, we may have *said prayers* indeed and a great many

of them, in the course of the year which we are now called on to review: we may have said prayers, but have we really prayed? Surely, if such be a true account of the hours or minutes we have spent on our knees, whether in public or in private, we may well be startled very exceedingly, at finding such words as these in the Book of God. *He* says "Pray without ceasing," and *we*, if the truth must be told, have seldom or never, in reality, prayed at all.

But not to dwell on so sad a case as this, I will rather suppose that amid much infirmity, and many drawbacks, excusable or inexcusable, you have nevertheless prayed more or less during the year: then S. Paul's question comes in. "Have you prayed without ceasing?" The very sound of it is extremely strict and searching; well may we pause and consider what it may mean.

It may mean, in part, that the whole life and being of a Christian should be so offered to Almighty God, by the fervent lifting up of the heart to Him on every occasion of the least consequence, that the whole shall be, in fact, a prayer. In this sense we pray to Him without putting our prayer in words, as often as we do right for His sake, nay as often as we intend to do right and humbly desire and hope in our hearts to be accepted by Him in so doing, through Jesus Christ, in Whose Blood all our best works must be purified. Thus to pray to Him without ceasing, to have every conscious and serious thought directed towards Him in simplicity and faith, is indeed the most blessed condition on earth: for what is it, but the life of a saint? and what can it end in, short of a saint's reward?

But perhaps the Apostle in the text was not thinking so much of this, as of the direct actual exercise of devotion: what would be called in common discourse, prayer. For in common discourse, you know, when we think of prayer, we think of one actually kneeling or standing before God and uttering certain words of petition. Is it then possible for us, in this sense, to pray without ceasing? Not at all impossible, if we rightly understand the saying. And we do, I suppose, understand it rightly, if we take it to mean these three things: that our prayer should be punctual, frequent, attentive.

First, our prayers will be graciously rewarded, they will in the sight of God be prayers without ceasing: if we are very *punctual* in them, if we be careful never to miss the appointed time of signifying our wants and sorrows to Him. It is a good thing in this respect, not to have very long prayers, but to make an exact rule of reciting them when their time comes. If it interrupts you a little in pleasure or business, so much the better; there will be a little, more or less, of self-denial, along with your prayers, and the more cheering may be your hope that your petition is heard.

But then, in the second place, these punctual prayers must be frequent. "Evening, and morning, and at noonday will I pray," says the Psalmist, "and Thou shalt hear my voice." And many of God's servants have been moved (no doubt) by the Holy Spirit to make, every three hours an express Invocation of Him, in a very short office. And it is what any one may do; for any one may kneel down at any hour, and say the Lord's prayer, with reference

especially to the particular blessing which he then desires to ask: and if he does this or even less than this, if he only say morning and evening prayers, constantly and with a good mind, he is in the way to be greatly blessed. His returns of prayer so short yet so frequent, will by degrees leaven his whole life: to use a kind of parable from a very ordinary work, it will be like what we sometimes see when people are laying down turf; if they cannot conveniently cover the whole space with fresh turf they lay a strip here, and a strip there, with no very distant intervals, and it very soon spreads, and becomes one continued greensward. Much in the same sort of way would the Apostle have us leaven our whole time with prayer: a little here and a little there, the second coming on before the first is forgotten, will by degrees overspread the whole space of our life, and make it all fresh and fragrant with holy desires.

But then it will be quite necessary, in the third place, that in all these our devotions we try to be attentive. I say, *try* and *mean* to be so: because at first unless by some very special blessing, we are sure to find it more or less difficult, I had almost said impossible, to make our minds go along with our lips: but let us not be too much disheartened at this, it is our trial or misfortune, not our fault, unless it be accompanied with wilful disobedience or negligence, in some part of our conduct. You know very well, if you would but consider, that there is an evil being who is very anxious to keep you if he could from continual prayer, because he knows, that if you pray continually you cannot possibly

belong to him. Perhaps, for your trial, that bad spirit may be sometimes allowed to interrupt your devotions: to put in wandering thoughts, and make it for the time almost impossible that you should attend. So that to yourself you seem fairly to have lost that hour or time of prayer. But do not you then give him so unfair an advantage, as to give up all endeavour at prayer, when the next hour comes. Rather redouble your efforts at that time; pray with all your might, that you may pray better and better; if you have time, repeat with more fixed attention the petitions in which you have been interrupted: if you have not time, yet say Amen at the end of the prayer with earnestness of heart, turning it back, as it were, on what had gone before, and summing all up in it. Thus, if your mind be not always strictly attentive, at least it will be always sincere: and God Who allows for all our infirmities will hear your devotions better than you hear them yourself. He will grant you your heart's desire, though you were not always consciously thinking of it when you made it the request of your lips.

Now then comes the searching question, too searching for every one of us, were it not for God's merciful offers of repentance and pardon, If we have not altogether neglected our prayers during the months that are past? if we have at times tried to pray attentively, yet in what measure have our devotions answered to what the Apostle requires? in what sense have we prayed without ceasing? Can we flatter ourselves, that a short prayer in the morning and another in the evening, said as I fear the greater part of ours have been said, half asleep, half in

worldly care, with little or no self-examination beforehand, and still less of earnest meditation and recollection afterwards—can we flatter ourselves that S. Paul was thinking of such as this, when he said "Pray without ceasing;" or when he wrote to the Roman Christians, that however active they might be in business, our Saviour expected them to "continue instant in prayer?" Can we imagine the holy Angels, whose office it is to watch the prayers of Christians, and bear them upwards, and present them on the heavenly Altar, contented with such broken flashes of occasional devotion? Can we imagine them rejoicing one with another, as being thus reminded on earth of the never-ceasing, perpetual incense, which goes up for ever before the high Altar in Heaven? No: the joy of those ministering spirits, be sure, is first, the perpetual Sacrifice memorial of Christ on the Cross, offered day by day in one part or another of the Holy Church Universal; and next it is the untiring piety of His saints and faithful servants, who both by frequent solemn prayers, and by thoughts of prayer when solemn service cannot be, try to keep in their own hearts and homes some faint shadow of the Church's unceasing prayer. These are the joy of Angels on earth, and when our prayers cease to be mere morning and evening forms, when they come oftener and are uttered more heartily, then, and not till then, will they begin to take the like joy in us.

I speak of private and public prayers alike: for of both alike it is highly needful that we strictly examine ourselves at this time. As to public or common prayer with His saints and penitents in His

holy Church, concerning which S. Paul writes that even a cruel persecution at hand ought to make no difference in our assembling of ourselves together: the joining in this is so necessary, except for some grave reason of health, or the like; that one scarcely sees how those (too many, alas!) that habitually neglect it, have a right even to profess and call themselves Christians. Consider, you that come here regularly; do you really come as often as you conveniently can? Have you come as to the house of God? Are you growing in the grace of devout attention and dutiful behaviour when you are here? And consider, you that come here but seldom, if any such be now present, consider what a thing it is, that by such negligence you should even now be further off from God than you were this time last year. And let not the diligent Church-goers dream, as I sometimes fear they may, of having a kind of license from the Almighty to be the less watchful in their prayers at home. Rather let the two sorts, prayer at home and prayer in Church, harmoniously combine, and sweetly encourage one another. And in so far as any one of us hath neglected either, may God give him grace and strength to repent without loss of time: and to live so long in such tolerable health, that he may prove his repentance to men and Angels: watching and contriving to have more and more devotions and to be more and more taken up with what they have.

Moreover we seem to be taught in Holy Scripture that prayer and thanksgiving should always go together. "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving." "Rejoicing in hope, pa-

tient in tribulation, continuing instant in prayer." And here to the Thessalonians: "Pray without ceasing; in everything give thanks." Pray, remember God at all times; Give thanks, trust and acknowledge God's love, under all circumstances. Here again is matter for deep thought for an honest and true heart. Such an one will say to himself, the Lord has undoubtedly bestowed on me abundant blessings, since I last joined with His Church in remembering His sacred Advent. Have I been duly thankful for them? Have I joined thanksgiving with my prayer in Church and out of Church, in open word, and in secret thought? How is it with me at this very moment? Can I look upon my own condition, everything in it except my sins with a resigned and contented heart? Do I say in earnest, night and morning "Thy will be done in earth as it is in Heaven?" Thy holy will and not mine.

Again, such a time as this demands surely especial thankfulness, for our having been left, while so many better persons have been taken; for the continued use of God's manifold blessings, offered to us as members of His sacred Body the Church. How many more honest and purer than we, more entirely devoted to their neighbour's good, have been allowed to go on all through the year from last Advent, in ignorance of Christ's true Church, and at a distance from its blessings! And while this thought makes us tremble, remembering what is said of those to whom much is given, yet surely it should make us full of gratitude also, full of love to that gracious Father Who did so choose us out to be more highly favoured than others.

More especially does it seem that we are now bound to recollect any spiritual mercies, and visitations which have been vouchsafed to us by the Holy Spirit of God and Christ, in last year's use of the Prayer-book, whether in holy seasons, or in ordinary times. Has your heart been moved more deeply than before, and your will stirred up to some neglected duty, by the exhortations of God's servants, by the meditations belonging to some holy season, or by some providential agreement between the Scriptures read in Divine service and the needs and trials you were just then undergoing? Has any thing happened at home, or among near and dear friends, to bring the heavenly and eternal things nearer, and teach us feelingly how vain and poor is the best that can be had here? Has there been sickness, sorrow, disappointment, death? Has the arm of God, which seemed outstretched to strike, and beneath which you lay trembling in the consciousness of grievous sin, and expecting the worst because you knew you deserved it, has that wonderful and gracious arm appeared suddenly to withdraw its terrors, and to be reached out to you in support and consolation? And that in answer to the prayers of God's Church, and of kind friends of whom you knew yourself unworthy? O let none of these recollections pass away from your mind and conscience; abide in them, and let them abide in you; surely in present comfort they are worth more than a thousand such worlds as this, and besides they bring with them the very fragrance of heaven: they are tokens of the loving care of Him "Who is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever:" Who cannot leave us nor forsake us except we forsake Him.

These are sacred and solemn thoughts; and yet there is something yet more sacred and solemn, which above all things must not be left out of our self-examination; and surely many of you, my brethren, know what I mean before I name it; the crown of all Church services, the Holy Communion of the Lord's Body and Blood. There is the offering, by virtue of which alone any prayer is made acceptable. There is the Church's ordained Sacrifice of thanksgiving. How then can we leave out this, when we are communing with our own hearts of prayer and thanksgiving? Ask yourselves in your Saviour's Name; how have you behaved towards Him present in these aweful Gifts, during the course of Church services which has just ended? My poorer brethren, I desire to ask you especially. I see with great grief of heart that very few of you indeed behave towards Jesus Christ as you ought to do. Many are dutiful and affectionate to their husbands and wives, to their parents and children, to their earthly masters and benefactors; but very very few indeed are dutiful and loving to their Divine Saviour. Why do I say this? Because if you were dutiful and loving, you would more of you seek Him where He is sure to be found, and those who do seek Him (I speak to the far greater part) would not be easy without seeking Him oftener. Once, twice, or three times a year, is surely but cold and undutiful attendance at the Table of the Great King, where He gives Himself to be the life of your souls. Consider well, ere it be too late, what account you will be able to give of the many invitations you have slighted this very year. Do you think you shall be able to say, as you now say

too unconcernedly, 'we were not fit, we were not ready?' Nay, who forced you to be unfit, and unready? Why could you not keep your wedding garment clean; or cleanse it by sincere confession and repentance? My brethren, especially my poorer brethren, take notice; you are now called on in Christ's Name to examine thoughtfully your past behaviour towards Christ present in His Holy Communion-feast. You may put off doing so if you will, but you cannot put off death and judgement; you cannot turn away the eye of the Judge, nor stop His voice when He calls you to account. Examined, judged, sentenced you *must* be: only a choice is mercifully given you, whether you will try and judge yourself here, or wait to be judged in that world where you can do yourself no good.

SERMON XXXIX.

TIME EFFACES NEITHER GOOD NOR EVIL.

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

2 S. Peter iii. 8.

"But beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day."

THE time just before Advent is a very serious and thoughtful season to all who take notice of time as the Church invites them. It is just the season of decay: the last leaves are falling, and the last flowers are ceasing to blow. We naturally look back and begin to consider how the weeks and months have passed, since those leaves were fresh: how many things we meant to do then, more than we have really done, how unlike in many respects the face of things now is, to what we wished and expected then. Also, we must be very blind or very thankless, if we fail at such times to notice the many mercies, more than we could expect, and very far more than we deserve, which our gracious God has continued to us: kind friends, beloved kinsmen, peaceful times, helps to do good; above all, the means of grace and repentance in God's Church. We see

the buds, which are to be leaves next year, forming already on the trees; and we are permitted to look forward with hope to the time when they will have come out in their beauty, and to make for ourselves good resolutions and rules against that time.

Now both in our aweful and in our cheering thoughts at this time, we seem to have great need of such a recollection as the text sets before us: "One day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day." The Apostle seems to take it partly from the ninetieth Psalm, "A thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday, seeing that is passed as a watch in the night." As if he should say, 'We mortals here upon earth think a great deal of a thousand years; it seems to us a very large space of time: but it is nothing at all in comparison of God's Eternity; to that, all times and all periods, short and long, are alike.' Try then to view the matter as God does, not to depend upon any long time to come, but to make the most of the time now present. And to encourage you in doing so, remember that other most gracious saying which is added here by S. Peter, not only are a thousand years as one day, but also "one day is as a thousand years." Almighty God can, if He will, accomplish in one day the work, which in an ordinary way would take hundreds of years. Here is consolation for the trembling penitent, who is tempted sometimes to say to himself, 'What can I do? the remainder of my life is so short. How can it be possible for me to repent in earnest?' Holy Scripture answers and says, "with God nothing shall be impossible." If you will in good earnest surrender yourself, your whole self, to

the guidance of His good Spirit, He can do as much for you in one day of true repentance, as in an ordinary way would take a thousand years. Let us consider these two things, the warning and the comfort, more at large.

And first, whereas time is nothing to God, but a great deal to us, we are apt to imagine and behave as if it were a great deal to God also. I mean in this way, that when men have committed sins a long time ago, and have really come to forget them or to remember them very faintly, it seems to them, in a manner as if God also had forgotten those sins. Even although they have not ever looked back upon them themselves with any thing like earnest repentance, yet the sin appears to them as if it were no sin at all. It makes no difference in their thoughts and behaviour to themselves. They never think of punishing and humbling themselves. If they did, we know that God in His great mercy would be as if He had forgotten those sins. We know what the Prayer-book teaches; that our heavenly Father in His tender love doth so put away the sins of those who truly repent, that He remembers them no more. "If we would judge ourselves we should not be judged of the Lord." But in the mind which I am now speaking of, we do not really judge ourselves. We do not really look into our hearts and consciences, to consider what we have done amiss, ever since we knew right from wrong; and not looking, of course we do not see very many of the sad things which we ought to see: and not seeing them we do not repent of them.

Christ gave us the white apparel, the wedding

garment when we were baptized. It was a long time ago, perhaps a great many years. Clothed in that robe of child-like innocency, we set out on our journey through this foul and polluting world: and if, at the end of our journey, we have it not to shew, what alas! will become of us? But although we have unhappily stained it, and that very grievously, still we are not without hope: for as a defiled robe may be washed, so our polluted hearts may be purified with tears and blood: with tears of repentance and the Blood of the Cross. It cannot however be so washed and purified, except the stains in it be found out, and cleansed to the best of our power. They will not wear out of themselves, by mere course of time. They must be brought to the "Fountain which is opened for sin and for uncleanness." They must be brought to Christ by contrite and humble confession. To pass our old sins over, and not confess them, nor bear them in sorrowful remembrance, merely because they were committed long ago, is as if a person should neglect washing his garments, and expect them to come clean of themselves, by mere course of time.

It will be said, How can this be, when a man has gone on in a long course of thoughtlessness? How can he remember all his particular sins which he took no note of at the time? I answer, He must do what he can, must do it fairly and truly, as in the presence of God; and his not doing more, will surely be forgiven and allowed for. If he do really with all his heart endeavour to call his sins to mind, and think them over in the bitterness of his soul, God will accept that willing mind: "according to that a

man hath, and not according to that he hath not," God will wash out the stain which he tried to see, and could not. He will cleanse us from our forgotten, as well as from the rest of our secret faults. Only let us not think slightly of them, or take it for granted that the mere time, which has passed since they were committed, has done them away: lest haply they be found in God's book at last, set down against us as presumptuous sins.

"A thousand years are with the Lord as one day;" therefore the evil deeds we did ever so many years ago, are before Him, except we have repented of them, as if they were but just committed. It is but our weak and imperfect fancy which causes us to mind them less after a time. To Him, they are always alike present. *We* are more moved by things when they are new; but to Him they never at all become old. He is as much moved by the murder of Abel, or any other old unrepented sin, now, as when it was just committed. If that innocent man's blood cried to Him from the ground then, it cries to Him now. Never then let us venture to think lightly of a sin or a course of sinning, under the notion that God has in a manner forgotten it, because it was committed a long while ago. Does not the Scripture say plainly that Almighty God keeps a book in which all our doings are set down: all our sins, secret and open, and that nothing at all can at any time blot a single sin out of that book, but the Blood of Jesus Christ applied to it by true repentance? Time makes no difference there: the doings of 50 or 60 years since are as distinct there as the

doings of yesterday: except, as I said, we have in true contrition, besought the Judge to blot them out.

I notice this particularly, because of those persons —alas, too many of us—who have gone on sinning for a certain time, in this or that way, almost as a matter of course, and then have left it off, the temptation in some manner ceasing, without any special contrition or confession, and have never since troubled themselves about that sin at all. Yet all the while it has continued written in God's Book: and what if it should meet us there in the day when the Books shall be opened? Oh let us prevent that dreadful Day: let us set ourselves even now, before the time of trial is passed, to remember our old sins, that our Judge may not remember them: let us pour out our hearts before Him by specially confessing and bewailing them, so far as we find ourselves guilty, and by earnestly praying that He would cleanse us from what we have forgotten: and having done so, let us cheerfully go on, watching our way in deep fear and humility through the temptations of each new day as they come on: not so dwelling on the thought of past sin as to unfit us for our present duties, or make us sullen and unthankful and unkind: yet so keeping those sins ever before us, as never to forget that we are the persons who did once so sin, and do that evil in God's sight, and that we can never love and serve Him enough, Who loved us and looked upon us, being such as we were. This will make us lowly and serviceable in waiting on the humblest of our brethren, like the penitent woman

who anointed our Lord's Feet, loving much, because she knew how much her Lord was ready to forgive her. This will make us patient and forgiving towards all who use us ill, remembering how long we have tried His Patience, for how many years He is even now waiting to forgive us, how much we have done to tire Him out, and yet He is not weary of doing us good. This again will cause us to be resigned and thankful under all the troubles and ill-usage which may at any time come upon us, regarding all as a kind of penance-discipline, mercifully ordained to cure our sin by the Great, All-wise Physician. My brethren, if you will try in earnest, you will find this, which is the only safe way, to be also, by very far, the most comfortable way. Who, calmly considering, would not rather choose the quiet though mournful peace of a contrite heart, than the false kind of ease which comes of mere forgetfulness: which, indeed, is always itself more or less uneasy, from a blind though most true consciousness, that all is not going on right; that a day of reckoning is yet to come; that we could not die in quiet, being such as we are? O let us be wise and examine ourselves in time, before the dreadful hour of His unsparing examination.

And for our more comfort let us consider, that Almighty God sets down also the good works, and acts of true love and self-denial, wrought by His servants at any time for His Son's sake. They are not blotted out of His book, except we blot them out ourselves by final impenitence. Hear His own word by His prophet Ezekiel; "If the wicked will turn

from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all My statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed they shall not be mentioned unto him, in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live." What a merciful and blessed promise is here! That if a person, like David, having gone on well for a time, fall into grievous sin, so that his latter life must needs be in some sense a life of penance, yet if that man truly repent, his good deeds done before will, for our good Saviour's sake, be restored to their place in God's book: they will go up for a memorial, they will not be thrown away. A thousand years, in this respect also, are with the Lord as one day. His servants' good and obedient deeds, wrought humbly through faith in Him, and by the power of His grace, are fresh and lively in His sight, as though they were but just performed; they may fade away more or less from the memory of men, but in God's book they remain written in characters as bright and beautiful as ever. Abel's sacrifice, Noah's faith, Abraham's resignation, Joseph's purity, David's thankfulness, the Blessed Virgin's lowly devotion, S. John's love, S. Mary Magdalene's penitence, S. Paul's self-denial, S. Peter's dutifulness—all the good works and sufferings of all the saints are even now before Him Whom they served, as incense newly offered up. He smells the sweet savour of them united as they are to Christ's Sacrifice, night and day, now and for ever. Our Lord's approbation and praise to that poor widow, offering up her two mites, was not a thing which

passed away, it was a continuing act. As He approved her then, so He approves her now, and will do so eternally. This is, I suppose, part of the wise man's meaning when he says, "[a] Whatsoever God doeth, I know that it shall be for ever." Man's doings and sayings pass away, but His word shall not pass away. For example, His word once spoken in the Holy Communion, "This is My Body:" "This is My Blood:" "This do in remembrance of Me:" goes on with power in every Eucharist we offer, and will do so to the end of the world. His word once spoken concerning holy Baptism, "Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;" and that other word concerning the same, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of God:" both these go on with power, and are continued, every time we baptize a child. We are not to think so much of the priest repeating the words, as of Christ continuing to speak them by the mouth of the priest. Think again of the saying which gives the power of Absolution: "[b] As My Father hath sent Me, even so send I you. Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins ye forgive, they are forgiven, and whose sins ye retain, they are retained." These sayings were not once spoken and are gone; they live and abide for ever: Christ is in effect for ever uttering them in the Church. Now the comfortable doctrine which I want you to consider is, that in somewhat of the same kind of way the works of good men for Christ's sake abide also for ever. Such works in a manner

[a] Eccl. iii. 14. [b] S. John xx. 21.

brighten and refresh the mark and seal, set upon the doers of them in Baptism, which is the token, by which the Angels know, whom they are to let into heaven. Therefore it cannot and will not wear away. The saints themselves forget their own good deeds, but Jesus Christ never forgets. They will say, "When saw we Thee an hungry and fed Thee?" But He will say, "Doing it to the least of these, ye did it unto Me: Come then ye blessed of My Father." Thus not only Christ's own mighty works, but our common and ordinary doings and sufferings may be made in a sense to abide for ever. Christ accepts them as done to Him and partaking of His eternity: and therefore He crowns them with an everlasting reward; not for any merit, properly so called, which is in them, but entirely for His own love's sake, He crowns and rewards His own work in His servants. As when He was upon earth He accepted the dutiful and charitable doings of such as S. Mary Magdalene and the good centurion, and yet it was not properly speaking *their* doings, but the work of His good Spirit moving their hearts: so is it now, so it will be always, so most especially, will it be at the last great Day.

Lastly, (to say again that word of comfort), if "one day is with the Lord as a thousand years;" then He can, by a great grace, do a mighty work of repentance in a very short time: and therefore, if there be anywhere amongst us a soul which goeth "stooping and feeble," brought very low through the consciousness of a more than ordinary burden of sin; let such an one take to himself this sure and unfailing com-

fort, that if he prays and strives in earnest, God can and will help him to a more than ordinary repentance, so that in a short time, whether he on earth know it or no, his sins will be forgiven in heaven, and the Angels will rejoice over him. Let him not fear to go on, though sorrowfully as regards himself, yet with hope and consolation in respect of his Saviour, and his heart will by degrees be purified and his eyes opened to see how wonderful God is: wonderful in all things, but most especially wonderful in His deep condescension to such as we are.

SERMON XL.

CHRIST OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

JER. xxiii. 6.

"This is His Name whereby He shall be called, The Lord our Righteousness."

My brethren, when all is said and done, there is no being happy without goodness: and we all know it very well, if we would but give ourselves time to consider it. There is not one of us but has something in his heart which reproaches him and tells him he ought to be sad and sorry and alarmed, when he has been breaking any of God's plain commandments: when he has been lying, or stealing, or swearing, or committing lewdness, or using another unkindly. Many of us, alas! may have gone on in our bad ways so long, that they have become as it were dead and blunted to these feelings: it seems as if their conscience had left off reproaching them: yet in good truth the conviction still is there, though it slumber, as it were, in the very bottom of their hearts. Still, if they could be made to own the very truth, they had rather do good than do evil, supposing their temptations away; they had rather be

friends with God than enemies: when they see a very good person, one who seems to delight in goodness, they secretly wish that they themselves were more like that person than they are. All these are tokens from the Most High, that sin leads man to hell, and righteousness to heaven: that miserable, guilty men are in a way to be lost, not by any want of God's mercy, but entirely through their own fault. It is the voice of God in every heart, saying, 'Do this, and live: but if you are wicked, you shall be turned into hell.'

We cannot be happy without goodness: *that* is one thing we are all of us quite sure of: and another thing is, that we cannot be good of ourselves: we cannot make ourselves righteous, we cannot change our own hearts. This also most of us are very willing to own, only we confess and own it in a wrong way, and put the confession to a bad use. We are ready enough, when reminded of our duty, to say, What is the use of telling us all this? We are weak and frail, however are we to become saints? And so we give up the matter, and indulge ourselves in all manner of wicked liberties; as though, supposing we could not be saints, it made no difference how great sinners we are. Others there are who wish and try to do right, and fail sadly, but instead of giving it up, they begin wishing and trying again and look out for better help: and these are in a good way: there is good hope of them, that they will one day be righteous indeed. But whichever way any one of us takes: whether he listen to the tempting whispers of his enemy, or whether, by God's grace, he give up his dependence on himself, only that he may depend

more entirely on his Maker: certain it is, and we know it all by mournful and shameful experience, that we are not sufficient to our own righteousness: we cannot make ourselves good of ourselves. Here then is the good news, the very Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Of ourselves we could not be righteous, but He came to be the "Lord our Righteousness."

When Israel, that is God's people, were sold to be captives under their cruel enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil; when they looked this way and that, and wondered there was no deliverer: God the Father raised up to them His only Son Jesus Christ: God the Son came down from heaven to be that Jesus Christ, that righteous Branch promised to David Who should bring a new time upon the earth: a time of His own, different from all former times; a time wherein "Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely;" i. e. the people of God, Christians, should be saved from all their sins, and being saved, should so continue.

"And this," says the prophet, "is the Name whereby He shall be called, the Lord our Righteousness." As if He should say, The great thing, whereby our Saviour will make Himself known upon earth, is this, that being God, He is come down to make us truly righteous. "He was manifested to take away our sins." "For this cause the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil."

Now, how is this great work of our redemption brought about? How does Jesus Christ make us righteous, take away our sins, destroy the work of

the devil in us? In two ways especially. First, for our past sins; because He has offered Himself a sacrifice for them, has blotted them out of God's book, has washed the guilt of them clean away: so that unless we by wilful relapse have brought it back upon ourselves, it shall never more be mentioned unto us: as saith the prophet, "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow, and though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." This is why our Lord has set up His saving Cross, like a royal standard, in sight of the whole world; that the heathen and unbaptized, coming to the foot of it, may there wash away their sins once for all in His most Precious and redeeming Blood, and that they who have taken on them a worse load, by returning to their old sins after they had been once washed, may still have a hope and a refuge, coming to Him, like Mary Magdalene, in true and earnest repentance, willingly bearing for His sake any temporal punishment which He may lay on them, and for eternity, trusting to His all-sufficient merits and mercies.

So far, Christ is The Lord our Righteousness in regard of remission of past sins, but how is it for the time to come? How are we to be kept against our own wicked hearts, and all the other grievous enemies of our souls, that we defile not again our baptismal or penitential robe? How are we to be inwardly changed, truly righteous in heart, mind, and action, and not only *counted* righteous because God is merciful to forgive us. We must be so in some way, else heaven may never be ours; for no word is plainer in the Bible than this, "Without holiness

no man shall see the Lord," and "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." In respect of sins past we can only be accounted righteous; what is done, cannot be undone, it can only be forgiven and passed over by God's undeserved mercy: but for the time to come, God expects of us that our hearts and lives be really improved.

He expects it of us, for this reason, that He hath given us grace and strength to accomplish it, if we will. Great and marvellous as the change is, and above all outward miracles, He has put it within the power of every Christian man, woman and child. So that if we are not changed, and made fit for heaven, it is not that He is wanting to us, but wholly and only because we are wanting to ourselves.

Now, how is this miracle wrought? By our being made members of Christ: limbs and parts of His mystical Body, of His Flesh, and of His Bones. So that as every limb and part of our Lord's natural Body, when He was here on earth among us, did what it was directed to do by His pure and most holy Soul, so we should everyone of us do as we are directed by His good Spirit dwelling within us. And although without Him we can do nothing, yet being mysteriously joined to Him by His Spirit in Holy Baptism, we are able to "do all things;" as S. Paul says, "through Christ which strengtheneth us."

Here then is our condition, set before us year after year by the solemn services of the Church: God the Son come from heaven, made Man, and dying on the Cross, to be our Righteousness, for the forgiveness of sins that are past, and uniting us to Him by His

Holy indwelling Spirit, that He may be also our Righteousness by making us good in time to come. This is our condition: this is our only chance of happiness: without this we are lost and miserable for ever. This is our salvation, the life and health of our souls: but it wants attending to every day, quite as much as the life and health of our bodies. If we did not regularly eat and drink, work and rest, lie down and rise up again, and do whatever is necessary for the life and health of our bodies, they would very soon languish and decay: if they are neglected but for a single day, most of us feel it very much: and so it is, if we would but believe it, with regard to our souls. Every day we have need to come to Christ for pardon of our many sins, negligences and ignorances: every day we have need to come to Him for grace to do the duties of that day, and to order our thoughts words and actions, in His fear and favour. Every day, and all day long, we have to look to Him as our Righteousness, for pardon of what is amiss: every day and all day long we have to look to Him as our Righteousness, for help to do better and better. To look to Him, and to walk worthy of Him: faith and obedience: these two are the whole duty of a Christian: and they are his *daily* duty: every day and hour that these are neglected is a day and hour lost.

Which of us durst deny this? and which of us can think of it without trembling; when he ponders over the time past of his life? Let us only take the time since last Advent, when this true Gospel warning, how that Christ is The Lord our Righteousness, was sounded in the ears of every one of us: and since

then the same instruction has been repeated for our good in more ways than I can tell of: more especially by the order itself and regular course of the days and services of the Church. For as Christ is our Righteousness by doing and suffering all those great things for us, so the first half of the Church's year, from Advent to Trinity Sunday, teaches us to believe all that He did and suffered: and again as He is our Righteousness in that He dwells in us by His Spirit, and enables us to do what is acceptable to Him, so the second half of our year, from Trinity Sunday to Advent again, teaches us to practise all His Divine commandments. Once more then I ask, How have we believed, and how have we practised, during all these weeks, and months, since Advent in last year?

Our Lord Christ has been all the time offering Himself to us to be our Righteousness. Every evening He has been at hand, watching to see whether we knelt down and prayed to Him with all our hearts to forgive us the sins of that day. He has watched like a loving Father, over our nightly self-examinations: whether we have really tried to remember our faults and humble ourselves for them in earnest: or whether we have been contented to own ourselves sinners, like the rest of the world, and to hope that we may be forgiven. Because if we have only done our self-examination in that very general and careless way, it is but a poor sign of real faith in Jesus Christ, real trust in His atoning righteousness. It seems as if one thought little of one's own sins, and were not especially afraid or ashamed to have affronted so good a Saviour. Whereas, had we really always dealt strictly with ourselves: had we really looked

after our transgressions, hunted them out of the dark corners of our memory: abhorred, confessed, forsaken them with shame and sorrow: it would have been a good token before our Father and His Angels that we love Christ, and have no hope but in Him.

Again, how has it been with us, all this twelvemonth, when we rose up from our devotions, and set about our daily duties? Which of us has had his heart full, all day long of the glorious Presence within him? The Lord God has been all this while in our hearts: it was our especial duty to sanctify Him there; i. e. to keep Him from being insulted and mocked by evil thoughts coming in and indulged. Our bodies have been all this while the temples of the Holy Ghost; we knew it; we ought to have recollected it: nothing impure, no abomination, should have been allowed to come near. Our limbs and members have all this while been the limbs and members of Jesus Christ, so that, to make a wrong use of them was the same sin and profaneness, as if one took hold of a limb of His holy Body, and made a wrong use of it. We have known these things, or might have known them, all through this year; have we borne them in minds? Have we refrained from wrong ways accordingly? Have we tried to keep each one his eyes, his tongue and his hand in order, for this very reason, that they are in truth the eye, tongue, and hand of our Lord Jesus Christ? Again, through all these months a great Almighty power has been dwelling within us, a power which if it were put forth could move mountains, and raise the dead: and we have had it in a manner at our command, so that at any time, upon our earnest prayer it would have

come to help us in good works: and what good works have we wrought in obedience to it, by its gracious aid? What have we done for God's kingdom without and within us? What souls have profited by our good example, prudent care, and seasonable warnings? What bad habits have we overcome? What good rules have we adopted and kept? How much have we offered to God without looking for any kind of recompense in this world?

Surely, my brethren, if every man is to give account of *all* his talents; the poorest heathen, of his one morsel of bread, whether he has been contented or charitable with it, or no: much more must we Christians, we who have received the Spirit of God, and have been made members of Christ, and have known all along our high calling, having been told it out of the Prayer-book ever since we could remember anything: much more, I say, must we expect to be called in question for our use of the unspeakable Gift. Indeed, and indeed, we shall have to answer for it: it is no use to hide our eyes from that plain and certain truth. We shall have to answer before the Judgement-seat for every day and hour of our lives, how far we have borne in mind that our Lord is abiding in us to be our Righteousness, and how far we have really tried to do righteousness according to that belief.

If these thoughts humble us, as well they may, in the dust, let us not too quickly seek diversion and comfort for our minds: rather let us cast ourselves down more and more, and not try to raise ourselves up again, until by God's grace, we have solemnly prayed for help to do better the next year:

to set ourselves good rules, and having set them, to keep them.

And what shall our rules be? First of all we must believe that we are ignorant, for of ourselves surely we are most ignorant, of our own true and most aweful condition. Let us then set ourselves a strict rule, to pray, every day of our lives, that He would open our eyes more and more, to see what eternity is, and how near we are to it: Who Jesus Christ is, and what great things He has done for us: what a trifle this world is, and how soon it will pass away. Set it down *now* in the tables of your heart, as a thing to be remembered all along till next Advent, that you are to pray especially for *light:* for truer thoughts about God and your own souls.

And for a second entry, so to speak, in the same book, set it down that you are to practise yourself every day in putting by excuses, and whatever else would make you rest in anything but your Saviour's Cross. Every day endeavour to get up with this mind, that, considering your past sins and present sinfulness, you have no right to take comfort in any thing but the love of Him Who came to be "The Lord our Righteousness." Cast yourself down, every day, and all day long, at the foot of the Cross. If that is not your mind, be sure there is something very wrong and false in any good works that you seem to do.

And now for one rule more, as Christ is come to be your Righteousness, not only by dying for you but by dwelling in you, so must you not only seek to Him for pardon of sins past, but you must also watch your own doings from day to day, not only

whether they are a little better than your neighbours', or a little better than your former doings, or the like; but whether they are such as become a member of Christ. For this is the teaching of the Church from one year's end to another, from Advent to Trinity, and from Trinity to Advent again; this is the sum and substance of the Bible, from the first verse of Genesis to the last of Revelations: "I am the Lord that redeemeth you, to be your God; ye shall therefore be holy, for I am holy."

SERMON XLI.

WATCHFULNESS.

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

REV. iii. 3.

"If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

THERE are many sentences like this in the book of Revelations, very aweful on every account, but especially as being spoken by our gracious Saviour Himself. As in the vision at the beginning of the book He appears with a sharp sword going out of His Mouth, and S. John falls at His Feet as one dead; whereas in the Gospels He commonly veiled His Majesty, His looks and deeds were almost always lowly and gentle: so here in the Revelations He speaks more as a King, and as one Who should come to be our Judge, less as a tender and suffering Saviour: and it is a fearful thing to consider what wilful and known sin must be in us Christians, since it causes Him Who died for us, the very Fountain of all love, to use tones so severe and threatening. Even as when an indulgent father is stirred up to speak very sharply to his children, all men know that their

offence must have been unusually grave. Let us see to it, my brethren, that we be not of the number of those provoking children, who force that loving Parent to chide them, and warn them so sharply. Or if we be, at least let us take the warning.

You know, when our Lord was upon earth, how He spake of the coming of a thief in the night, as of something rather like His own coming to judgement. His word was, "Watch therefore, for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come. But know this, that if the good-man of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up. Therefore be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of Man cometh." That was His caution to His disciples, and to us all, when He was just on the point of laying down His life for us: and after He had gone away into heaven, He appeared in glory to His beloved disciple S. John, and through him repeated the same caution more than once, only, as I said, in a severer and sharper tone; as might well be, seeing how grievously the Christians even of those early days had already begun to abuse His longsuffering. Therefore He saith in another place, "Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watcheth, and keepeth his garment, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame:" as much as to say, 'Take care lest I come suddenly, and strip you of your white robe which I gave you in Baptism, finding it defiled by sin and not cleansed again by repentance.' And here in the text, to the Church of Sardis, which had a name that it lived, and was dead; whose works God had not found per-

fect; a fallen Church, whose good things were ready to die: to such Christians our Lord writes by S. John, "Remember how thou hast received and heard, and hold fast, and repent. If therefore thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee."

Here surely are alarming words, for those especially, who have a name that they live: to those who are doing *some* good works, who have *some* good things remaining: who have received and heard the great truths of the Gospel: to such surely it is very alarming to be told, as our Lord here plainly tells them, that it is possible theirs may be only a nominal life, they being indeed dead unto Him, while all the world accounts them living: that perhaps the good things which *do* remain among them, are just ready to die. Surely it is alarming to all, even the best of us, to be told that they may perhaps be fatally deceiving themselves: that however good we may reckon ourselves, and be reckoned by our neighbours, there is a chance of our going wrong. The more decent and orderly and scrupulous we seem, the more need have we to attend to this warning: for the decent, orderly, scrupulous people are the very sort to whom it is addressed. And see, it is our Lord's own warning, given at first as one of His parting lessons, a day or two before His Passion, and solemnly repeated afterwards, as you have heard. And so much was made of it in the early Church, that it was even a proverb, a saying among Christian people, before either of the Gospels were written. At least so S. Paul appears to signify, where he writes to the Thessalonians, "Yourselves know per-

fectly, that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." How should they know it, since no Gospel was yet written, except as I said, that it was a saying, a proverb among Christian people? As we know the sayings in the Sermon on the Mount, or the plainest parts of the catechism, so they knew that the great Day was to come as a thief in the night. That is, Christ's coming will be without notice. Just as a man, who meant to rob a house, would of all things take care not to let the master of the house know at what hour of the night he would come: so neither is it our Lord's will that we His servants should know when He will come to be our Judge. And as the thief comes silently and quietly on, making no noise, causing his footsteps to fall very gently, holding his breath, choosing the most retired paths, so our Saviour is bringing on the world in ways unseen, unknown, unfelt, nearer and nearer to that aweful uncertain moment; aweful to all, uncertain to all but God. And all this was so well known, that it was a proverb even among beginners in Christianity, yet so little considered, that there was need of the Son of God, appearing solemnly from heaven, to give warning of it to those people of Sardis, who were well thought of, and had a name that they lived. If so, my brethen, surely there may be need that the same warning should be repeated to us. Assuredly we all need it, both good and bad: but observe now with what a difference the same warning comes to different people. "If thou wilt not watch," says our Lord, "I will come on thee as a thief, and thou shalt not know what hour I will come upon thee." By this it should seem as

if He would not come as a thief to those who *do* watch: as if they *would* know what hour our Lord will come upon them. And yet we are elsewhere told, and we know from our own experience and other men's, that no one knows the time of God's coming. No one knows the exact time either of his own death, or of Christ's coming to judge the world. We must all die, but we cannot tell when. We must all stand before the Judgement seat of Jesus Christ: but *when* that judgement will be, that day and that hour knoweth no man. It may be to-morrow: it may not until after thousands of years. Good and bad alike may be quite sure of the fact: good and bad alike are quite ignorant of the time. And yet here we find our Saviour holding it out as a peculiar threat against those who refuse to watch. "Thou shalt not know what hour I shall come upon thee." As if, had they watched, they might have known. How is this?

I think it will appear, when we come to consider, that the faithful, obedient, watchful heart, *will* practically know the hour of our Lord's coming. Because, endeavouring always to be ready, it will of course be so at that particular time. Suppose: it is an aweful thing to imagine, the Judge should come this very day: that within a few hours between this and the darkness of the evening, the world should come to an end; the trumpet should sound, and the dead should be raised, and we should stand before the Judgement-seat of Christ, to be tried and sentenced every man according to his works;—in one sense, of course it would come sudden and unexpected to us all: but it would not confound and amaze all alike. Because there may be some of us,

who by God's gracious help have learned to live always as if they were presently to die and be judged: who have prayed in the morning, that they might live this day as if it were to be their last upon earth, not putting off any duty, not venturing on any sin: they made this prayer in the morning, and when they rose from their knees and set about their day's work, they did not forget their prayer; they have still kept on doing their day's work, and shrinking from sin, in the serious apprehension, that for aught we know, this very day our God may come upon us; it may be the last day of the world, or at least it may be our last day in the world. If any person has gone on regularly in this way, since he waked in the morning, mindful of God's Eye which is always upon him, and of God's Book in which all his sayings and doings are set down; I say that neither death, nor judgement itself, would come to that person altogether unknown and suddenly. Though he were as unable as the most thoughtless to tell the day and the hour beforehand by any kind of number or reckoning, yet when they came he would know them: they would not find *him* altogether strange and unprepared. But to the wicked and unbeliever all would be quite sudden. He would pass without notice from his sin and worldly engagements, into the world which he has hitherto refused to think of. So it would be, were our Lord and Judge to come suddenly, and set up His throne in the midst of this congregation. In a moment we should be parted into two sets: the one of those who have prayed in earnest this morning, and have since been really trying to live in His faith and fear,

the other of those who have not remembered Him either in their prayers or in their lives. It is our gracious Lord's most earnest desire, that we should every one of us be in that first happy company, and none of us in that other miserable one. Therefore He poured out His Blood on the Cross for us: therefore He so mercifully warns us, again and again, "Watch, for ye know not the day nor the hour. If thou shalt not watch, I will come on thee as a thief." Therefore also the Church teaches us to pray against sudden death, as you know we do from time to time in our Litany. What should you think was the meaning of *sudden* death, in that petition? Chiefly, I suppose, *unprepared* death: death which comes suddenly on the soul. For as on the one hand it is no great calamity for one thoroughly and habitually prepared to go before his Lord upon short notice, so on the other hand, when a sinner dies impenitent, death and the world after death will open upon him in a moment, such as he never thought of or expected. On him eternity will dawn suddenly, though he have endured ever so long an illness. And who can conceive the horror of that change?

That we may know it by imagination only, and not by fearful incurable experience, there is but one thing to be done: one short word to be realized, "Watch." How are we to watch? How keep our death, the time which we know not, from being sudden? How may we do this for one day? since if we manage that well, we have but to repeat the practice the next day, and it will spread over weeks and months: it will sanctify our whole life, and leaven it with goodness. Of course, our day must begin with

prayer: and that prayer must be very watchful. That is, while we are praying, we must think of God in earnest as being near us: close to us, aye even within us: and we must try to mean what we say to Him. For what if He should come suddenly, and find us thinking of something else?

And as our day begins with prayer, so it must go on by rule. We dare not surely live at random, or any how, not minding what we do next, or how we do things. No: He has set us our tasks, He has appointed every one a calling, and has promised to be soon here: very soon: to see how we are doing our task. Set your mind therefore on your task, whatever it be. The Master may come when one hour is over; at noonday, at evening, or not till after night. Your time may be much or little: *that* does not so much signify: only do you resolve beforehand to make, by His help, the most you can of it. Your departure will not be sudden, nor in any bad sense untimely, if it find you really and regularly at work for your God. You know what I mean by working for God regularly. It means that you should set yourselves rules and keep them: rules for the good of your souls: as those who are out of health have rules given them for the good of their bodies. You should have rules, not only for your work, but for your meals and diversions. You know, e. g. generally speaking, how much is best for you to eat and how much to drink: make a rule in the fear of God to take about so much, and no more.

Again, since you must expect often to be tempted and at times to be overtaken in a fault, watch beforehand against occasions of sin, and resolve before-

hand, should you unhappily fall, not to put off your repentance for a moment. And that you may never pass a day in spiritual slumber, make a great point of nightly self-examination. Before your evening confession and prayer ask yourself how you have behaved this day? Begin with recollecting how it was in the morning when you awoke, and go over in your mind regularly what you have been doing all day: and be as strict and particular as you well can, remembering that your Lord's eye is upon you, and that He may in any moment come, as He hath told us He will, and cause *us* to see Him, as He always sees *us*.

These are plain simple rules, my brethren. You have not been now told them for the first time: a great many of you have known them many years. Let me now beg you to ask yourselves before next Sunday, 'How have I kept our Lord's law of watching, through the weeks since last Advent?' Next Sunday, Advent will begin again; one of the solemn times for penitency: and I fear we shall affront God, if we do not seriously search our ways since this time last year. Our Lord said to us, "Watch," a twelve-month ago, as clearly as He says it now. 'Watch unto your prayers, night and morning: keep your minds and hearts towards God as you pray.' Have you done so? Or have you prayed by rote, or at random?

Our Lord's teaching is, 'Live by rule; keep under your bodies; work your work while it is day.' Where are your rules? And how have you kept them? What self-denial have you practised? What care, to get your great work done in good time?

Our Lord said, "Remember whence thou hast

fallen, and repent, and do thy first works." In these months how have you fallen? And have you made haste to repent? And where are the good works, which are by His grace to bring you back to your days of innocence?

Our Lord by S. Paul says, "Examine yourselves." Have you done so regularly this year, especially before your evening prayers? Or is the sad weight of the sins of those many days and months still hanging upon your souls?

What if the heavens had opened, and the Judge had come upon us this morning, at the time of our prayers? Would He have found us with our hearts really lifted up to Him or no?

What if He had come at any meal-time? Was there no surfeiting, no judging of others, no other kind of foolish talking, in which we should have been sorry for Him to overtake us?

What if He had come last night, whilst we were asleep? Did we lie down prepared for Him?

What if He had come yesterday, whilst we were at work? Could we have turned to Him, penitent, yet hopeful, and offered Him what we were then doing as part of our daily sacrifice?

What if He were to come now, this very moment? O that in such fearful event, He might find us all, at least, with good resolutions in our hearts: true, solid purposes of amendment! For why should we go on from year to year, provoking our Saviour and corrupting and endangering our souls, when one real, good, courageous resolution might save us, and make us happy, with Him and through Him, for ever?

SERMON XLII.

THE UNCHANGEABLENESS OF GOD'S LOVE.

SUNDAY BEFORE ADVENT.

S. JOHN xiii. 1.

"Having loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end."

YES, indeed, my brethren, He hath loved us unto the end: there is nothing which He hath kept back from us. He emptied Himself of His glory, the glory which He had with the Father before the world was. He took upon Him our flesh; He made Himself to be sin for us, He Who knew no sin; He laid Himself down in the lowest pit, in a place of darkness, and in the deep. His own words are, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" "Thine indignation lieth hard upon Me; Thou hast vexed Me with all Thy storms." He being the only begotten Son of God, "Begotten of His Father before all worlds, God of God, Light of Light, Very God of very God, Begotten, not made, Being of one substance with the Father; By Whom all things were made" did "for us men, and for our salvation" come "down from heaven, and was Incarnate by the Holy Ghost

of the Virgin Mary, and was made Man, and was crucified also for us, under Pontius Pilate. He suffered and was buried." Thus He loved us unto the end, in giving up all for us: there was nothing that He kept back from us in the way of not sparing Himself. And in another way also, He hath loved us, and will love us unto the end. When the time came for Him to rise again from the dead, to ascend into heaven, to sit on the Right Hand of the Father: all these things came unto Him, (as He Himself speaks) not for Himself, but for our sakes; that we too might arise, that we might ascend with Him, that we might sit down with Him on His Throne. And when He shall come again with glory to judge the quick and the dead, and to take to Himself perfectly and finally His kingdom, whereof shall be no end: that also will be for our sake, that we having received the Holy Ghost, and lived and died in the Holy Catholic Church, and received in Holy Baptism, and not cast away, the remission of all our sins, may be made followers of Him, in the resurrection of the body, and in the life of the world to come.

In some sense we, even we, unworthy members of the Church in these latter days, are enabled to have higher and deeper thoughts of this great Mystery, Christ loving us to the end, than the very Apostles had at the time of which S. John is speaking. For as yet our Lord had not laid down His Life, neither was the Holy Ghost yet given. There were yet many things which He had not spoken to them, for they could not at that time bear them. But to us, and to all His disciples since the Day of Pentecost, the whole counsel of God for our salvation is de-

clared: and so far, we are more competent judges of the meaning of those wonderful words, "He loved them unto the end," than the very Apostles were, before the coming of the Holy Ghost.

And there is, alas, another way, in which we who now live, have reason, if we could but feel it, to stand amazed at His loving us to the end, more than any former generation had. For still as the world and the Church grow older, the Righteous Judge, strong and patient, is afresh provoked every day by the manifold sins and wickedness of those who ought to know better: that is, of us all, so far as being Christians, we fail of being good Christians. Day by day, and week by week, and month by month, and year by year, our iniquities cry aloud unto heaven, and seem to say, 'How long, O Lord, Holy and True, wilt Thou bear with this wicked world, and this imperfect Church: with them who refuse to come in, and them who being within, have not the wedding-garment?' And still He spares us, still He allows us more time, still He withdraws His Hand, and plucketh not His Right Hand out of His Bosom to consume those, who by their sins have made themselves His enemies, or gone too near to do so. Whether we are worse than our fathers or no, surely His permitting us to be yet on our trial, after so many provocations on their part and ours, is an increasing mercy, a token of love greater to us than to them, greater to each succeeding generation, as they go on revolting more and more, until they shall have brought down His final sentence, and the flood of fire come, and sweep them all away. So far, we have more and more reason to think with adoring and

trembling gratitude on the words, "He loved them unto the end."

At all times it is well to have thoughts like these: sorrowful thoughts of our continued sinfulness, loving, trusting thoughts of His loving us unto the end: and never are they more seasonable than on this particular Sunday, and the week which belongs to it. For these seven days are allowed us, by God's good providence, (if we live so long) to be days of earnest preparation for the holy time of Advent, which will begin next Sunday. And as you heard just now, mention of our Lord loving us to the end occurs (this year) in the first verse of the Gospel lesson for the day. It seems as if it were a text chosen on purpose for us to meditate upon to-day: a text pronounced by the blessed Apostle, for each one of us to preach upon to himself. And how may we preach on it? Surely if we attend at all, we can hardly help saying to ourselves, 'O my soul, see here the difference between the works of God and the works of man, and especially between the love wherewith God hath loved us, during this year which is all but past, and the love wherewith we have loved Him. The works of God are indeed all perfect, He worketh them "unto the end;" that is, to their full completeness: as the Wise man says, "[a] whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it." Or as we read in another Wise man, "[b] All the works of the Lord are good, and He will give every needful thing in due season. So that a man cannot say, This is worse than that: for in due time they shall all be well approved."

[a] Eccl. iii. 14. [b] Ecclus. xxxix. 34.

And again, God worketh His work "unto the end," in that He is constant and unchangeable. "[c] Hath He said, and shall He not do it? Or hath He spoken, and shall He not make it good?" And Jesus Christ is "the Same, yesterday, to-day and for ever." These have ever been the great differences between God's doings and the doings of His fallen creatures. Theirs, blemished and quickly passing away; His, perfect and enduring unto the end. But none more perfect, none more enduring, than that of which we have been told to day; the love of Jesus for His own which are in the world. Human love, the firmest and the tenderest, may and will decay and come to an end. "[d] Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget:" (so we read in the prophet) length of time, other trials, or at least old age, sickness, and death, may dim, and in time perhaps utterly wear out, the first feeling of a mother's love, not to speak of the sad instances of which Holy Scripture speaks, when tender and delicate women have been driven by the horrors of famine, to eat their own children. "They may forget, yet will not I forget thee." And as it is in the Psalm, "[e] When my father and my mother forsake me, then the Lord taketh me up." Such and so constant, so infinitely more than mother's love, was the love wherewith the blessed Jesus loved His own that were in the world. He loved them unto the end. His love was just as fresh, now at the end of so many months and years, after He had had so long experience of them, as when He first chose them, and called them out of

[c] Num. xxiii. 19. [d] Is. xlix. 15. [e] Ps. xxvii. 10.

the world. We poor weak and unstable mortals often take to a person earnestly for a while, and seem as if we could never be tired of waiting upon him and doing him good; and then, sometimes for no reason, merely because we are fickle and grow tired, sometimes out of displeasure at something we perceive in him, we leave off doing anything for him: we count him no longer a friend, we take no more interest in him. But there is no failure, no flagging in the love of Christ to His disciples. Many times they had behaved to Him as persons without understanding: His sayings, when He spoke most clearly, had been hid from them: they were very often forgetting themselves and Him, not knowing what manner of spirit they were of, sometimes striving among themselves who should be greatest: and He knew it all: He knew that one of them had already allowed the Evil one to put it into his heart to betray Him: and still, it is written concerning them, As He "loved His own which were in the world, He loved them unto the end." He loved them as His own, and He loved them in one sense the more, because they were yet in the world. They were not, like Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and the Prophets, safe in paradise, awaiting His sure deliverance, but they were still exposed to the troubles and temptations of life: still, so far, like the lost sheep, not like those who were safe in the fold. And therefore as He left the ninety and nine in the wilderness, and went after that which was lost: left the Angels in heaven, and came down for us lost men and for our salvation, so in a certain sense He loved these His own the more for that they were still in the world.

And as long as ever they abode in the world, they were objects of that, His peculiar, anxious love.

Now we, my brethren, are as the Apostles were then. We are Christ's own, in the midst of this dangerous world; and why should we doubt that as He hath loved us all along, so He still loveth us, and is minded to love us to the end; except we, with the unhappy Judas, determine finally to cast ourselves away. So it has been with us all. He hath loved us all, during this other year, this one more round of the Church's holy seasons and days, which it hath pleased Him to add to our lives. Advent is now nearly come again, and during all the weeks and months which we have passed since last Advent, He has been with us, to preserve and bless us. Many, surely, and great have been our earthly blessings: which of us all would venture to deny or doubt it? If life and health continued, if food and clothing and a house, if strength for our daily work, and skill and learning sufficient for our needs, if employment, maintenance, a decent character, if dear friends and kinsmen, and kind neighbours—if all these be real blessings and comforts, then surely He Who hath preserved us, the far greater part of us, and of those who are near and dear to us, in these and the like blessings, to this very day: He hath loved us as His own; we need not question His mind to love us to the end. How much more when we begin reckoning the spiritual favours we have received from Him! He hath been near us, close to us, hath gone in and out among us, every day and all day long. If we have not forgotten His prayer, and the other good prayers which He had us taught

in our childhood, it is He Who hath kept them in our minds. From time to time, from day to day, we have read and heard out of His holy Book, or at least we might have had that blessing; and His ministers have been at hand to speak to us in His Name. That was His spiritual Presence among us, His Divine voice speaking to us, as distinctly as ever He spoke to His own when they were in the world. Here has been His Church, within a short walk of each one of us; here it has been all the year long, and He, we trust, ever present, according to His promise, that in all such places He will come unto His people and bless them. Above all, here He has been, here have been His Body and Blood, really present in the Sacrament of Holy Communion. We have been permitted to draw near and touch, yea taste Him, in a mysterious unspeakable way, which S. Mary Magdalene herself could not know of, until He had ascended to His Father and poured out His Spirit. The Bible, the Church, the Sacraments; the light, the grace, the consolation: the checks and reproofs when erring, the guidance when doubtful, the instruction when ignorant, the chastening when we had transgressed, the joy and peace (if ever we have had it) in the humble hope of doing good; to say all in two words, the means of grace, and the hope of glory —all these He offered us, all these He put within our reach last Advent, *and He offers them now again.* Having loved us at the beginning of the year, He hath loved us on unto the end of it. There has been no inconstancy, no swerving, no capricious change in Him. But what return have we made? How have we met all these mercies? So near as He has been

to us (unless our sins have been so grievous as to drive Him away), actually dwelling in us all by the good and Almighty Spirit Which He gave us in our Baptism; our works surely ought in some measure to have partaken of the excellency of His: they ought to have been perfect, after the manner of men, and they ought to have been constant, enduring, persevering. But what kind of works, alas! have ours really been? And what manner of men are we, in comparison with what we might have been? If we ever had any beginnings, any slight rudiments of love towards Him, and towards those who are His own, what has become of those good beginnings? Have they not too often faded into nothing, as the morning cloud, and as the early dew that passeth away? How many prayers have we said, devoutly and diligently as we ought to have said them? How many good resolutions have we seriously made, *courageously* made, with hearts fully bent to keep them? And of those which we have made, how many have we tried in earnest to keep? Alas! too often I fear that might be said to the best of us, which the anxious Apostle said to his backsliding Galatians, "Ye did run well: who did hinder you, that ye should not obey the truth?" Some of us have been moved, may be, from time to time, by something in an earnest sermon, and a person may have gone home saying to himself, 'Well, please God, I will make a difference in my way of life: I *will* be more regular in my attendance at Church, I *will* prepare myself, and seek proper help and instruction, and will wait upon my God in the holy Sacrament of the Lord's Supper.' And he may have pleased himself with this idea for

a short time: and then, too soon, alas! the ordinary thoughts and concerns of this present world have come strongly over him again, and he has in effect said to the good purpose, as Felix said to S. Paul, 'Go thy way for this time, when I have a convenient season—when my debts are paid, when my children are provided for, when I have finished such a work, when such and such persons have done using me ill; then I will obey my Lord's dying command, then I will draw near and receive That, without which He hath told me plainly, There is no life in you.'

Yes, my brethren, it is too true: in one or more of these things we have sadly failed, too many of us, during the Sundays and weekdays which have passed since last Advent. Christmas, Lent, Easter, Whitsuntide, all the holy days of our Blessed Saviour and of His glorious saints and martyrs, have passed once again over our heads: we are so much nearer the sight of the great realities, which those sacred times are intended to represent to our faith:—Are we the better for those glorious and ready helps? Are we, in heart and spirit, all the nearer to Christ Incarnate, crucified, and risen? All the more obedient to the godly motions of the Comforter? They who have profited most, whoever they are, will, I am sure, be the readiest to acknowledge that they have failed in profiting so much as they ought to have done. The truest lovers of our Lord will most sadly feel that they have not loved Him, as He hath done them, to the end.

What then, my brethren, shall we give up our endeavours to improve, shall we say, 'It is vain to keep the Lord's ordinances, and to walk mournfully,

that is penitently, before Him?' Nay, not so: God give us a better mind. A good farmer, when his crop has failed, does not give up endeavouring to improve his ground, but looks well into the causes of his failure, and takes all reasonable pains to ensure a better crop next year. And we too, by the grace of God, if we are at all wise for our own souls, shall not suffer any past failure to make us weary in well-doing. Rather we shall look very diligently into the causes of our sad deficiencies, in order that by His grace we may supply them hereafter. And you may depend upon it, we shall always find that they have been caused by our giving way to *self* in some respect or other. Our corrupt hearts have led us, more or less, sooner or later, to put our own selves, our own selfish appetite or fancy, in the place of Him Who loved us and died for us. This then is what we must do, if the next Advent is to find our souls in a better condition than this will: we must pray for grace to overcome our own selves, our own wills, and to put in their place the will and mind of our Lord. We must pray and strive that henceforth we may not be allowed to deceive ourselves, but may really desire and intend to deny ourselves and serve Him with all our hearts. To this end, we must pray and strive, that we may love Him: love Him far better than ever we have done yet. We must pray and strive also that we may lose no more time, but at once set about this course of denying ourselves: the more quietly the better, only we must do it in earnest. And here again love will be all in all. We shall deny ourselves more throughly in proportion as we come to love Him better. We must pray and

strive, thirdly, for the heavenly grace of perseverance: that we too may in our poor measure love our Saviour as He loved us: that is, to the very end; without grudging and without changing. This is the way of our salvation. It is a plain way: let us take it. Why should we stand idling any longer? Why not turn all our faces toward heaven, this very Advent? We shall not all live to see another: and which of us knows but he himself may be one of those who shall be taken away?

SERMON XLIII.

THE MASTER'S REWARD PROPORTIONED TO THE PAINS HIS SERVANTS TAKE.

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

S. Luke xix. 16.

"It came to pass that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, that he commanded those servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading."

We have to give in our account, and the time is short. Are we prepared, or at least preparing for it? Or are we breaking our word with our good Master: wasting His treasures, and our own time; letting every thing alone, until it shall be too late to set it to rights? That is one question which our Lord asks of us: the very time of year asks it. For next Sunday will be Advent Sunday again; the Sunday which begins the holy season appointed for us all to humble ourselves, that may worthily keep our Feast-day for our Saviour's first Coming, and obtain more and more of His grace, to watch for His second Coming. You would wish, I am sure, to pass a happy Christmas, and you would wish, if it might be, to be

found ready when our Saviour comes to judge you. The only way to either of these blessings is to humble yourself beforehand—not, to *say* humble and lowly words, but really to humble yourself in heart. To do this, you must know your own sins: and to know your own sins, you must take account of your ways. For you cannot make yourself *un*accountable for them. You cannot stay God's hand, and hinder His setting them down in the aweful Book which He keeps concerning every one of us. You cannot hinder that book from being opened, in the last day, at the very page which contains your history: you cannot stop the mouth of the Angel, and hinder the proclamation which shall be made out of the books: it will be too late to ask the Judge for a little more time, or a milder sentence. There will the book be, and there will be our doings written in it, and there will be all men and all angels assembled to hear what manner of persons we have been, and where we have to abide for ever. We must give account: had we not better at once begin to cast up our books? Every hour that we delay it, we may be sure, puts us more deeply in our Master's debt.

And on the other hand, every hour that we save for our work, every endeavour we really make to quicken and improve ourselves in it, will somehow or other tell in our favour. There is a parable which sets both the warning and the encouragement in the clearest light. Remember the parable of the ten pounds in the nineteenth of S. Luke, "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return. And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and

said, Occupy till I come." Now there is not, I dare to say, a plainer parable than this in the Gospel, and I make no question that the greater number of you know well enough what it means without any explanation, if you do but attend to the reading of it: but I will just notice each particular as I go on. The nobleman is of course our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and in His human Nature the Son of David. He went into a far country, when He departed from earth to heaven. He received a kingdom, when He sat down at the right Hand of God the Father Almighty. He will return when He comes at the end of the world to judge the quick and the dead. His ten servants are all we Christians, from the Day of Pentecost, the birthday of the Church, until now. His ten pounds are the gifts and graces, some of one sort some of another, some earthly some spiritual, with which He severally endows each one: as it is written, "When He ascended up on high, He gave gifts unto men," and His saying "Occupy till I come" means, 'Make what profit you can of the portion of goods which I have entrusted to you: employ it, do not let it lie idle, see how well you can manage it against the hour of My return.'

But there is one thing especially to be noted: that whereas in the twenty-fifth of S. Matthew there is another parable very like this—the parable of the talents—in which a certain householder goes on a journey, leaving his servants in trust, in S. Matthew the servants are not all entrusted alike: one of them has [a] five talents, another two, and another one: to

[a] S. Matt. xxv. 15.

every man according to his several ability: but here in S. Luke they are all entrusted alike; there are ten pounds committed to ten servants, each having his own pound. Plainly then our Lord is here telling us, what will happen in the end, if two persons having equal helps to please Him and do good, one of them makes a better use of his helps and means than the other does. That which happens in the parable is, The nobleman returns, having received the kingdom, and commands those servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. One comes to him and says, "Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds:" and to him the Master saith, "Well done thou good servant, because thou hast been faithful in a very little, be thou ruler over ten cities. And the second came saying, Lord thy pound hath gained five pounds: He saith also unto him, Be thou also over five cities." The gift, you see, was the same, but the returns were unequal: as in that other parable, of the sower: it was the same sample of corn which the husbandman sowed all over the field, but even in the good part of the ground there was so much difference, that some brought forth thirty, some sixty, some an hundred. All these were good, but some were far better than others, and worked harder in God's service, and in doing good to their brethren. So it has always been in the Church: as S. Paul notices in his first letter to the Corinthians. There are some that plant, others that water, and "every one shall receive his own reward according to his own labour." What is, "according to his own labour?" The parable tells

us: He that with the same means has done ten times as much as another shall receive ten times the other's reward: he that has wrought only five times as much, his reward also shall be in proportion. Ten pounds are recompensed with ten cities, five pounds with five cities. One only received no reward at all; it is he who brings his pound wrapt up in a nakpin, neither more or less than it was at first, and thinks it enough that he has not lost nor wasted it. He is not rewarded, but punished, and his punishment is this—his pound is taken from him and given to him that hath ten pounds.

The reward is out of all proportion to the work; cities for pounds; an angel's place in heaven, or something very like it, for humbly submitting one's self in faith and obedience during this short life, to the will of Him Who loveth us. For "they that shall be accounted worthy to obtain that world and the resurrection from the dead cannot die any more, for they shall be equal to the Angels." You force your keen angry temper to give way, and entirely forgive some one who has once used you very ill, and what is the consequence? Your Father in heaven forgives you the sinfulness of many years. You help poor hungry men to bread, thirsty men to water, the naked to clothing, the sick, the prisoners, the strangers, to such relief as they want; and the Lord reckons it done to Himself, and invites you into heaven, saying, "Come, ye blessed of My Father:" and so in all other points of holy obedience, the reward is so exceeding great in comparison with our doings, that we may well understand it to be beyond the deserts of man or angel, to be in fact the free and gra-

cious gift of our Father, bestowed on His unworthy servants wholly and only for the sake of His blessed Son.

And accordingly you find that the servants in the parable, when they are giving in their account, acknowledge, every one of them, that the money with which they had been trading was not theirs but their Master's. 'Lord, Thy pound hath gained ten pounds. Lord, behold here is Thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin; lo, there Thou hast that is Thine.' As much as to say that any goodness there may be in us or in our doings is not our own but entirely His; His endowment, His gift: and so when we bring it to Him we can but say with holy David when he was making his offerings for the Temple, "Of Thine own have we given Thee." And if you mark it, the very reason why the last named servant proved wicked and slothful and unprofitable, was his dislike to labour for his Master not for himself. "I feared thee, because thou art an hard man, thou takest up what thou layedst not down, and reapest what thou sowedst not. Lo, here is thy pound which I have kept laid up in a napkin." He thought it not worth while to take any pains, knowing as he did that, after all, the fruit of those pains would be his Lord's, not his own. In a word, he could not bear to renounce himself, to give all the glory of all that might seem good in him to God: and so he went on in an ordinary way without trying in earnest to improve his stock, yet thinking to escape condemnation because he had not wasted it: and we see what his end was.

By this you may plainly understand, that the way to a great reward in heaven is to reckon nothing

that is good to be our own, but all the free gift of God's most holy and blessed Spirit, and so to pray and work, pray and work, counting all that ourselves or others can do, to be not our doing but Christ's; and humbly laying it all before Him, to be rewarded and accepted or no, just as He knows to be right. And the persons who do this most thoroughly (though they will least know it themselves), they will have a brighter page than their brethren in the Book of Life: they will shine, not only "as the brightness of the firmament, but as the stars for ever and ever." And as S. Paul says, and we see, that "[a]one star differeth from another star in glory," so we are to be quite sure that among the mansions of our Father's house some are more glorious and desirable than others. And it is the will of our gracious God that we should think a great deal of this; He encourages us to do our very best, if by any means we might attain to a higher place among His faithful ones. And therefore the Church in that very ancient collect which is ordained for this week puts this word into our mouth: "Stir up, we beseech Thee, O Lord, the wills of thy faithful people; that they plenteously bringing forth the fruit of good works, may of Thee be plenteously rewarded." See here, we ask of God that we may abound more and more; that we may not in regard of heavenly things contentedly sit down in the lowest place, doing as little as we can, just enough to escape hell: God forbid that we should be so cold and heartless: our prayer rather is that we may *plenteously* bring forth the fruit of good works, and so of Him be *plenteously* rewarded. He

[a] 1 Cor. xv. 41.

hath called us to be saints, to be perfect: but observe: this perfection is to be had not usually by venturing on new and strange ways: on remarkable doings, such as other people would notice. But the perfection to which we are all invited is by His grace in the power of each one of us: for it lies simply in this: in continually endeavouring to do our ordinary work better and better in the sight of God. As for example, in our thoughts, you have become aware perhaps of some wrong fancy, some evil inclination, which haunts and vexes you very often: then your very first step to innocence and to perfection is to watch and turn away from all that is apt to bring that thought into your mind; to watch and pray against it more earnestly and continually to-day than you did yesterday, and more earnestly to-morrow than to-day. Again, if any one has used us ill, the way to perfection is to pray more and more heartily, and do him, as we have opportunity, more and more good. Again would you be perfect in prayer? Instead of making new rules, try in the first instance to keep your old rules perfectly: be not disheartened: try and try again: He is sure to hear your prayer, and to answer it, sooner or later; only do not give it up. Once more: Have you work to do, whether in a high or in a low station? Does your temptation lie on the side of dishonest sloth? Is there danger of your working truly and thoroughly just while people are observing you, but wasting your time when no one is in sight, and doing what you do any how to save yourself trouble? Remember, dear brother, what was said to him, whom God raised up to be our pattern of faith,—to Abraham: "Walk *before Me*, said

the Lord, and be thou perfect." Recollect always what Eye is upon you, and for His sake do your day's work, whomsoever you are working for—do it as perfectly as ever you can. Thus by degrees, you will move upwards. Slowly but surely the Lord will bless your endeavours: and bye and bye when the great account is called for, you will be amazed at the strangeness of your own salvation. He may say to some of you, "Friend, go up higher, be thou ruler over ten cities" when you expected at most, not to be cast into outer darkness. You may find as in the Gospel to-day, that your fragments of duty, gathered up for love's and obedience' sake, multiply into a far greater quantity, and obtain a far greater reward than you could ever have thought of beforehand.

Many of you, my brethren, are engaged in some kind of trade or business, by which you get your bread. Should you not think it the greatest encouragement, to be quite sure of your profits if you were not wanting to yourself? How cheerfully would you then go on from day to day? Now this is just your case, the case of us all, in our common business that we have to do for God. If a man has but a good will and mind to bring forth plenteously the fruit of good works, it is as sure as God is true, that he will be plenteously rewarded. His place in that perfect and glorious world will be just in proportion to his earnest and sincere doings in this hard-working disappointing world. Oh why are we so languid and listless? Why will we not labour and long after something more than merely escaping hell? What is become of the dutiful eager love, which redeemed

sinners should practise towards their Saviour? Such love surely would never be contented to be only just free from punishment, not quite turned out of His Presence; it would set us on trying all ways, to come, unworthy as we are, a little nearer to Him than *that:* to enjoy as much as we may of the light of His countenance. Alas! we know not what we do, when we trifle with His gracious promises. We do not consider what a great, what an infinite blessing every degree of heavenly glory is: and it may be that by indulgence of our ordinary faults, even if we do not ruin our souls for ever, we are nevertheless cutting ourselves off from some higher measure of it, as yet fairly within our reach.

And then there is this aweful thought, What if while I am imagining myself good enough to be accepted, and so allowing my heart and senses all sorts of liberties short of serious sin—what if I should be mistaken after all, and find too late that I have gone beyond, perhaps far beyond, the point where I promised myself to stop? What disappointment, what confusion, what anguish, what ruin would ensue! Then, when it is too late, men will see and acknowledge the wonder-working goodness of our Lord, in placing the heavenly crown, the crown of glory, (by the help of His Spirit) within our reach and power: and deep and bitter will be the self-reproach of all who have scorned or neglected it. Try then, brethren, only try, in earnest. Try with all your heart, try for the love of Christ to be thoroughly and entirely fit for the lowest place in the Presence of your Lord, under the footstool of the lowest saint; try, and see what comes of it: you may well trust Him

for that. It only needs a thorough good will, which may be obtained by earnest prayer, and here are the words of the prayer ready to your hands, "Stir up, we beseech thee, O Lord, the wills of Thy faithful people; that they, plenteously bringing forth the fruits of good works, may of thee be plenteously rewarded." Why should this be too much to ask of you? Our Lord says, "Be perfect, for the love of Me." He means what He says, He will very soon be here to see if we have attended to His meaning.

SERMON XLIV.

TRUST IN GOD'S CARE.

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

1 S. PETER v. 7.

"Casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you."

"ALL your care"—

Did ever any of you observe, my brethren, the abundant and most wholesome comfort to be had from this one short word All, in many of the great sayings of Holy Scripture? I make no question but many of us have felt this without exactly knowing how, or distinctly saying it to themselves, e. g. in the sentences following the penitential part of the Holy Communion office, "Come unto Me, *all* ye that travail and are heavy laden." What a power is there in that *all* to make every one whatever who is in any kind of distress quite sure of one Friend at least, and what a Friend! what a Helper! One who will be All in all to us, if we will let Him. And again in the next sentence "He gave His Only-Begotten Son to the end that *all* that believe in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." And S. Paul, "It is a saying of *all* men to be received, that Christ

Jesus came into the world to save sinners," and, "He will have *all* to be saved," and, "Look unto Me and be ye saved, *all* the ends of the earth." Oh! if we could but receive it, what a comfort is there in that one word *all*, to go straight to the very inmost depth of every broken heart in the world. And here we have it again in the text. Our Lord tells us by His Apostle S. Peter, himself by natural temper, as it may seem, one of the most anxious and tender spirits in the world, "Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, casting all your care upon Him, for He careth for you." "*All* your care." Let us think of it earnestly, let us put our minds to it. What care is, we all know but too well; except perhaps a very few of the youngest among us. If one were to go round this whole congregation, and ask each one separately, who is there that would not own himself to be in care about something or another? Care, you know, means anxious thought, trouble about what may hereafter come to pass, restless wondering how things may turn out. How many are even now in care in respect of their worldly circumstances; some about their absolute maintenance, whether they shall get bread to eat, and raiment to put on. Here, they say, is winter coming on; times very hard, the necessaries of life very dear, our employment, it may be, uncertain, many mouths, perhaps, depending upon us: how*ever* are we to get through it all? "The multitude is very great, and hath nothing to eat: whence are we to buy bread for them?" Others are troubled, not for fear of complete destitution, but for that other fear, more humbling if less painful,

of not being able to keep their place, and hold up their heads as before among their neighbours. In one sense they may have enough and to spare, but they have made certain engagements, have entered upon certain works, have become providentially used to certain ways of living, and they know that others not unreasonably expect certain things of them: and their means seem now to be growing more scanty: they look on and are alarmed with difficulties gathering round them. Here is one sort of cares: cares about money and maintenance and necessary expenses; and who can deny that they are real and very heavy? Who is so hard-hearted that he cannot enter into them and pity them?

Others again, and it is likely there are some such here; if you went on to them with the question, What is *your* care? "Why are ye troubled, and why do thoughts arise in your hearts?" They would tell you it was the frail body, their own health and safety, or that of some child or parent, wife or husband, brother or friend, or some one else very near and dear to them. I am apt to be chastened they might say, with pain upon my bed, and I fear a return of my suffering: or such an one whom I love is sick, and I cannot bear the thought, What if it should be unto death? What if he should never recover? And some, it may be, are broken-hearted because of various separations which have caused them to lose sight of one or another, who was as the light of their eyes, and night and day the fear haunts them, What if I should see him no more? what if I should have like old Jacob, to go down to the grave mourning for him?

Or your care may be about your character, respect

and credit among your neighbours, or with some in particular whom you greatly value, and you may lose your rest with sad imaginings, What will such and such an one think of me? How shall I be ever able to hold up my head again? We may feel like holy Job, who could bear every thing else, but was quite overcome when his friends turned against him and put an unkind interpretation upon his doings. This also is a sore evil: one, we may say, of the very worst, and most trying to quiet well-meaning people, when, as sometimes, it befals them.

Then, what a weariness and anxiety it is to have on you the care and charge of others, to have to give account of *them*. Give ear to the great prophet, who had as much of this trial, probably, as any that ever lived. It had almost proved too much for him, though he was the meekest and most faithful of men. "Lord," saith Moses, "why is it that Thou hast sent me? What shall I do unto this people? it is too heavy for me: kill me, I pray Thee, out of hand." And even the blessed S. Paul was sorely tried with that care of all the Churches, which caused him to cry out, "Who is weak, and I am not weak? Who is offended, and I burn not?" So it may be with some of us, and most perhaps with the most conscientious: when we feel ourselves put in trust with others and long to do them good, and know not how to set about it: when parents' hearts are made to ache by children's disobedience, or fear of it: when priests or masters of families are obliged to bear about with them a heavy burthen of anxiety, lest their loving care prove vain, and the sheep they are commissioned to find prove lost for ever.

Or, (to mention but one instance more), those whom we inquire of, might tell us it was fear for their own souls that troubled them: they might cry out with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner:" or with the jailer in the Acts, "What must I do to be saved?" Or with Saul the new-converted, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" And the deep sense of their own past sins and daily failure in doing what He tells them they should, may cause them often to exclaim in fear and anguish, "O wretched man that I am, who can deliver me from the body of this death?" Some such, there are, no doubt: and while their trouble lasts, it is the most grievous of all: nevertheless, by God's mercy, it leads straight to the most blessed end.

For thus it is, brethren, as surely as the Lord liveth: to each and all of these various sorts of care, and to every person afflicted with any one of them, but most of all to those who are in care for their sins, the blessed, the comfortable, the gracious message is sent, 'Cast all your care upon Him,' be it of one kind or of another. Take each different sort of anxiety, and you will find a special promise for it in the treasure of promises, the holy Book of God. Thus, if your care be how to get your bread, for yourself and your children, He tells you, Who is the Creator of bread and of all things, "Take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink. He who feeds the birds and clothes the lilies, shall He not much more feed you?" This very day you have heard how He fed five thousand with a very few loaves and fishes, when they had come to wait on Him, and were fainting for want of something to eat. Trust

Him in earnest, and He will bring you through this winter, however hard, as He hath fed you all your life long unto this day. He will feed you with food convenient for you; according to the station which He sees to be best for you; only trust Him with your whole heart.

Is your care, on the other hand, for health and safety, your own or that of some one for whom you are bound to care? Bring this also to Jesus: for to Him when He was in sight among men, they used to bring all that were sick of divers diseases and torments, and them that were lunatic, and them that had the palsy, and He would lay His Hands on them and heal them! And since He went away into heaven His word is, "The prayer of faith shall save the sick." He watches by every bedside, He assists in all ministrations; by His grace Christians are enabled to wait lovingly on those they love best, and do all their duty with calmness, when, if they were not Christians, they feel that their very hearts would break. Nay more, by His grace they are supported in the still sadder trial, felt by so many, of knowing that some of those whom they love best are at a distance, perhaps, sick or dying, and they so far off, unable to do anything for them but pray: but they *can* pray, they *can* cast their care upon their Saviour, and this is sufficient for them.

As to that other and still greater trouble, of being ill-spoken or ill-thought of, deservedly or undeservedly, the word of Scripture is to the one sort, "Consider Him that endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself," to the other, "Let them reproach, for the Lord hath bidden them." Whether thou be

penitent therefore or innocent, thou art still invited in time of rebuke to do as Hezekiah did: to spread the letter before the Lord.

And what if your trouble be perpetual disappointment in doing your appointed work, and getting others to do theirs: what if being trusted with some of our brethren we rise up morning after morning with a sort of plans and intentions for doing them good, and night after night have to lie down with the sad thought that no good seems to have been done, and to wonder with trembling what will come of it in the end? This also our good Saviour commands us to trust in His hands; His word being to one, "Commit thy way unto the Lord, and He will bring it to pass," to another, "Cast thy bread upon the waters:" to Timothy a Christian Bishop, "Be instant in season, out of season;" "if God *peradventure* will give repentance;" as much as to say, When you have done your best, you can but leave the event to God: and He, if you truly seek Him, can make up for your failures: be not too much disheartened by them, but still work on, and still lean on Him with all thy weight.

In all these varieties of care and anxiety, it is wonderful, my brethren, how much of God's fatherly hand we might trace, each one for himself, in His dealings with us particularly; if only our eyes and our hearts were well open to such things. I will try and shew you what I mean. Even within the last week or two it has occurred to me to read, in letters which I have been permitted to see, two very distinct instances (I think we may venture so to call them, but we must speak of such very reverentially)

two distinct examples, I say, of God's special and most merciful interference in behalf of persons truly casting their care upon Him. Both happened in the course of this year. The first happened to a person who had gone out to a distant country, partly to wait on a brother whom she dearly loved, partly to do what she might towards making Christ known among the heathen. In this good work of conversion she had so far succeeded, that one young man, the first of his tribe, had been baptized, God's grace blessing her endeavours. It so happened that her brother was at a great distance from her, when she heard of his being very very dangerously ill: and she set out to nurse him with only that one convert to wait on her and protect her. With all manner of difficulties, frequently from want of food, they came to the edge of a country forty miles broad, inhabited not by men but by wild beasts only: and they had nothing to travel with but a wagon which could only go part of the way by reason of the rough ground. She made up her mind to go with the wagon as far as she could and walk the rest of the way: but it was a fearful journey, literally among lions, and she was at her wits' end. So while the people who belonged to the wagon were having their meal before they set out, she got into the wagon and prayed earnestly this short prayer, "Help, Lord, help." A very short time afterwards a young Englishman, happening, (as we call it) to be within reach, came up to her, and begged leave to accompany her (the convert, her servant, had, I think, been sent on to her brother): and in the course of that day they fell in with two more Englishmen,

friends of his; and the three persuaded her to wait where she was, while they went to see after her brother, promising to bring him to her, if they found him alive. By God's great mercy, they did find him alive, and so much better, that they, with the convert, being four in number, were able to carry him all across the wilderness of the lions to where his sister was: she nursed him in a tent for some time, and when he could bear it, they journeyed (the brother, sister and convert) to the nearest town, in the wagon, it was so far that it took them five or six weeks, he sleeping of course in the wagon at night, she on the ground under it: the whole time she never took off her clothes: she being, I should add, used to all the comforts common in England among people of the richer sort. She managed to get home on a Saturday to receive Holy Communion the next morning. So far as we have heard, God had blessed her journey, and her brother seemed in a way to recover. What can we say of it all, my brethren, but that she cast all her care upon our Lord, and He surely cared for her!

The other is a shorter and simpler instance, but, as I suppose, a no less real one. It happened also in this present year. A clergyman in great distress on account of the sad state of his Church, and his want of means to repair it, made it his special prayer in the Sacrifice of Holy Communion on one of our Lord's great days, that some persons to whom he was to apply, and who were on some accounts very unlikely to help, might give him a favourable answer: and so it came to pass and the work is likely to go on. He also, my brethren, cast his care upon the

Lord, and for him also the Lord shewed His gracious care.

Would that the consideration of such cases of His merciful interference may lead us to consider more effectually, how that He encourages us, nay, commands us, nay, lovingly beseeches us, to cast our burthen on Him in respect of that greatest concern of all, the salvation of our own souls! We are justified by faith, i. e. not by works of righteousness, which we have done, but wholly and entirely by clinging to Him. We may indeed too easily ruin ourselves, by letting go our hold of Him, as we do by giving way to any known sin, or wilfully rejecting any known duty; but to save ourselves is past our power: we can but let Him save us. Like drowning persons, our only chance is to leave ourselves to be borne along by Him; not to struggle, nor impede Him nor force Him to part with His grasp of us. We must resign ourselves to His gracious Spirit working in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. Lost sheep we were, and He hath found us, and is bearing us, we trust, home on His shoulders: our part is simply to be borne along by Him, not to resist Him in any way.

We need not fear to trust Him so entirely. Sinners as we are, we need not scruple, as if we were taking too great a liberty. He is like a strong and kind friend supporting one very weak and tender: He bids us to lean on Him with all our weight. Observe His word: it is "[a] *Cast* thy burden on the Lord;" "*casting all* thy care upon Him." O sweet condescension! as if He should say, 'Lose no time,

[a] Ps. lv. 23.

trust Me at once with the whole, I have power and love to bear all for thee.'

Observe also the reason; "He careth for thee." This is what so wins all our hearts in the great and kind persons on earth: to perceive that we are noticed, not forgotten; that some account is made of us, how mean and insignificant soever we know ourselves to be. And shall we not love and serve this great and good Saviour, Who not only remembers us, but commands and beseeches us, by all the Blood which He shed for us, to trust Him as entirely, as if He had no one else to care for, even as we surely have no other to depend upon?

Only let us see to it, my brethren, that we do cast our burthen wholly on Him. We must not divide it between Him and the Evil one, thinking generally to seek help from Christ, yet venturing now and then to take counsel of the devil, for the satisfying some great necessity, or earnest desire: as David once did, and never forgave himself. Far be such a course from you and from me and from every one whom the Lord our God shall call.

But let our prayer and our hope be like this; 'We believe that Thou, O good Shepherd, art indeed bearing us home, help us quietly to abide in Thine Arms. Let nothing tempt us to separate ourselves from Thee, and then Thy word is given, "I will not leave thee nor forsake Thee." Thou wilt never set us down till Thou hast borne us home, and there will be joy over us in heaven.'

SERMON XLV.

GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS THAT REMAIN.

SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE ADVENT.

Ps. xxxix. 15.

"O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength: before I go hence, and be no more seen."

WHAT a thing it is, my brethren, when we come to think of it, that our Father in heaven, should not only have promised to hear us when we pray, but should actually have put prayers into our mouths, teaching us words in which we may pray. I am not thinking of the Lord's prayer only: there is in the Bible a whole book of prayers, if we would but consider and use it as such: I mean that book which has been sometimes called the prayer-book of Christ and His saints, the book of Psalms. Perhaps it may never have struck you, but it is quite true, and you will at once perceive it, if you will think on it a moment, that a great many verses in the Psalms are so many "Lord's prayers," i. e. prayers made by our Lord Jesus Christ, (for the whole Bible is His Word) and put by Him into the mouth of any Christian who may have need of them. What special mercy, my brethren! what extreme condescension is here. He made us, He knoweth what is in us, He is touched

with a feeling of our infirmities: He knows (for He made us what we are) what a relief it is to us His poor creatures merely to cry out and express their trouble in words. His children, His little children we are, and He loves to hear us call upon Him, as on our loving Father: and because we are sometimes bewildered with our troubles, and know not how to think and speak distinctly, and may well be often overwhelmed with a sense of our sin and unworthiness, and fear to ask Him for what we want; He does with us as mothers and nurses do with children who cannot yet speak plainly, He tells us the words of the prayer He would have us say, and listens to us saying it after Him, and mercifully accounts it our own prayer. And there is another thing, another point of mercy, in this. We might not have quite known in many cases whether it was right or no to pray for certain things which yet we cannot help desiring. As for instance: a man who feels how very short life is, to him especially, because he is growing old, or because he is sick and nigh unto death, naturally feels inclined to call upon the Lord to grant him a longer respite: to withdraw His hand and spare him for a time. This would be any one's natural wish: but he might doubt how far he might properly indulge it, whether he might pray to God to give him more time, or no. Here then is a verse of a Psalm, containing the very prayer and supplication which we in such a case would wish to put up, in words which must be pleasing to God, because they are His own words. "Hear my prayer, O Lord, and with Thine ears consider my calling: hold not Thy peace at my tears. For I am a stranger with Thee:

and a sojourner, as all my fathers were. O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength: before I go hence and be no more seen." I would ask my aged brethren and sisters, Do you not feel with me, that as we grow old, and perceive the end of our lives drawing on, it is a great consolation and support to have such a prayer as this put into our minds by Almighty God Himself? How loving, how merciful of Him, to shew us in this way His deep consideration for us; considering our trouble, and knowing our soul in our adversities. As if He should say, "O aged Christian, you have now passed the greatest part of your earthly pilgrimage, you are old and well stricken in years, and you think with yourself, How short my time is! It seems but yesterday that I was looking round me, in the full glow of my manhood and of my health, and saying in my heart, 'The world is before me, I may turn what way I will, I have plenty of time, plenty of chance for enjoyment:' and now it is all gone like a shadow or "as a dream when one awaketh:" and where am I? What have I done? What will become of me? Whither am I going? These, aged Christian, are thy thoughts, and thou art driven to wish and to pray, 'O that I had more time! O that I could be as in the days of my youth, to make a fresh beginning and do better before God than I have done! but since that cannot be, O that He would at least hear my prayer, and grant me some little more time: time to consider, and to come to a better mind: time to do some little good, to undo as far as may be some of the evil I have done: time to look into my past life, to bewail and confess my sins one by one, as well as I can, before

my God: time to learn the love of God and of my neighbour: time and grace to resist temptations, to practise good duties, to give me and my friends a comfortable hope that God has not forsaken me as I deserve, but has bestowed and will bestow the blessed gift of perseverance.' These, my elder brethren and sisters (for I now speak to you especially), may well be your prayers and mine, when it comes over us how much of our time is passed, and how very quickly we are approaching our latter end. And we may be sure that our Lord approves of such prayers, and will hear them with pity and compassion, seeing that He has even taught us to use them, by putting these words into our mouths, "O spare me a little, that I may recover my spiritual strength: before I go hence and be no more seen."

Again, you perceive at once without my telling you, how graciously these words are suited to the feelings of persons very sick, and alarmed with the sense that they are sinking: that a few hours in all probability will take them into another world. Like good king Hezekiah when he was sick unto death and had heard God's message from the prophet Isaiah, "Set thine house in order, for thou shalt die and not live." He turned his face unto the wall, he would no more look towards anything in this world, but would be alone with his God, as entirely so, as ever he could: and what was his prayer? "O Lord, I am oppressed, undertake for me." In meaning, though not in words, it was the same prayer as David's, "O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength." To the very utmost of his power, till his eyes even failed with looking upward: Hezekiah continued praying

thus, and the Lord was ready to "hear" and "save him." If you know anything of sick beds and death beds, or have been in severe and dangerous sickness yourself, you know of yourself, I need not tell you, what manner of prayer this of Hezekiah's was: you know how often it happens, when Christians pray thus, or their friends for them, that the merciful God hears the prayer, and grants at least a partial recovery of strength, spares the patient for a little while, gives what is called a lightening before death. O well for that sick person and those who love him, when they receive such gentle dealings of their God as being what they really are, an indulgence for a short time! (for short is the longest time that can be granted in this world). Well for them, when the respite makes them more penitent as well as more thankful! Well for the sick man, when the first use he makes of his reviving strength, is to wait on God in His House: and why not on week days, if occasion be given him to do so, as well as on Sundays? And well for his friends and kindred when as they go about their business and pleasure in renewed cheerfulness by reason of his recovery, they take care not to forget Him to Whom the amendment is owing, and make it more than ever their business and pleasure to shew themselves grateful to Him.

But now I will suppose, on the contrary, that the person for whom you were in care, died and that you have to attend his funeral. Then again according to the Church's order you will have to join in the same prayer: for at every funeral, as you know, the thirty-ninth Psalm is said, and this last verse of it must have been marked by every one of you.

Strangely inattentive indeed must he be, who when the mourners are waiting round the coffin, has not been touched with the mournful yet hopeful prayer, "O spare me a little, that I may recover my strength; before I go hence and be no more seen." Of course, you understand, my brethren, that this is now the mourners' own prayer, offered for themselves not for him. Thou who art laying thy friend in the grave, and art deeply cast down under God's heavy hand: it is thou who art taught by the Holy Ghost to pray, "Spare me a little, that I may recover my strength:" i. e. 'Give me grace to bear this sorrow; so far to recover from it, as to have strength and grace to serve Thee more and better and more cheerfully than ever before: for I see how short the time is, and how very soon I shall have to go hence, and be where he is whom I am now seeing the last of in this world. O that when we meet again, we may see each others' face with joy. Only, O Lord, give me spiritual strength for the few years or days of trial which remain, that I may not forfeit that happy meeting.'

And the prayer which is thus appointed to comfort us, by our friend's grave, will be found no less suitable in any other bereavement or disappointment; and most of all, perhaps, in that saddest of all disappointments, when a man looks back upon his own works, and sees how sadly they have fallen short of what his good Saviour intended them to be, and what he had promised himself in his better moments. I will explain what I mean, by two plain examples, the one public, relating to the whole country, the other private, such as we are each one of us concerned in separately for his own self. For the public

example I will take that public matter towards which all Englishmen's thoughts turn at present. What should England's prayer be at this very time concerning India? England, great and rich and glorious and strong as she appears to be, and no doubt really is, must yet, as a nation, "go hence and be no more seen." She must come to an end, for all nations must come to an end: they are creatures of this world, and must pass away at latest with it: therefore, as I said, this England of ours, of which we are naturally so proud and fond, has a time appointed for it in the counsels of the Almighty, beyond which it will not last: it will "go hence and be no more seen." And surely the prayer and wish and endeavour of every one of us who loves his country must at this time be that before that moment arrive, she may have so far recovered her strength, as to accomplish that good work in India, for which no doubt God gave her such power there. Why did God make England Christian, and then give her power over India? Of course it was that she in her turn might make India also Christian. Far indeed, my brethren, have we been from accomplishing our high and holy task, and a little while since it might almost seem as if He in His just displeasure were about to deprive us of all chance of accomplishing it. What then ought our prayer to be? What would be a right-hearted workman's prayer, if he saw his master taking away from him a task which he had grievously neglected? Would he not, if he dared, beseech his master even with tears to try him yet awhile longer, and see if he did not work harder and better? Such should our peti-

tion be now: 'Lord, spare us yet awhile, spare this nation so busy about gain and credit, so slothful concerning Thy service and the conversion of souls: let it alone some few more years also; help England to recover its spiritual strength: to plant victoriously in India the same cross which of old time she planted in Germany (for you know, my brethren, some of you, that the heathen in Germany were first converted by a holy missionary from England: yes, from this very part of Hampshire): therefore, as I said, we should pray with all our might that God would give us His Holy Spirit to win the like blessed victory now: to spare us as a nation, and continue to us our power in that country, until by His mercy, we have sought out His sheep there, and brought them to be saved through Christ for ever. And if this should be our prayer, you see at once what should be your duty: to be no longer slothful and lazy, cold and indifferent in this great missionary work; but as you were told the other day, to double not only your alms, but your prayers also and your penitence and all your good works.

Now I go on to the other instance by which I promised to explain to you the virtue of the Psalmist's penitent prayer, "Spare me a little, that I may recover my strength: before I go hence and be no more seen." Do you not perceive at once, my brethren, how marvellously well it might come into the mouth and heart of us all on this particular Sunday, the Sunday next before Advent? Here we are come, so to speak, very nearly to the end of our prayers for the year, and as a holy man said, we had need begin afresh and say them over again, so im-

perfectly have we minded them, so little have we followed them in our practice. But it is impossible; the days and times, Christmas Lent Easter Whitsuntide etc. are gone and can never, never be recalled; there remains but this little fragment, one week before Advent begins again, six weeks before the New Year: a scanty little fragment it is, but shall we not gather it up? Yes surely, your Saviour bids you do so in to-day's Gospel, and now He is teaching you a prayer for grace to do so: for what is "Spare me a little, that I may recover my strength: before I go hence and be no more seen," but 'Help me to gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost?' And fear not to try: there is great, unspeakable encouragement. Remember those who were hired at the eleventh hour: you are not indeed quite like them, your idleness is worse than theirs, for you cannot say as they could, "No man hath hired us:" yet He is merciful: He teaches you to pray even thus late that you may recover your strength, and if you pray in earnest, you *shall* recover it. He will help you to do so much of your Father's work, now while it is yet day, though only for one hour more, that when the night cometh you will have your penny to receive, i.e. everlasting life through His dear Son. And more than that, who knows how high a place you may obtain in that heavenly kingdom, if even for this eleventh hour, you will humbly and steadily try your very best? We know of one who in less than an hour was converted from a blaspheming thief not only into a true Christian but into a glorious saint: and God is not tied to time. He can and will do wonders in a very

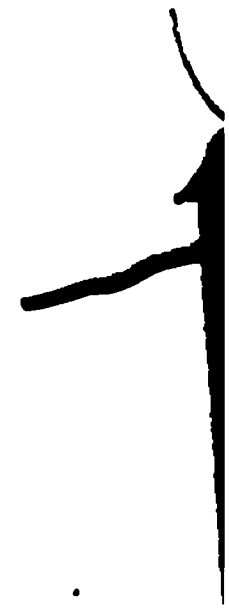
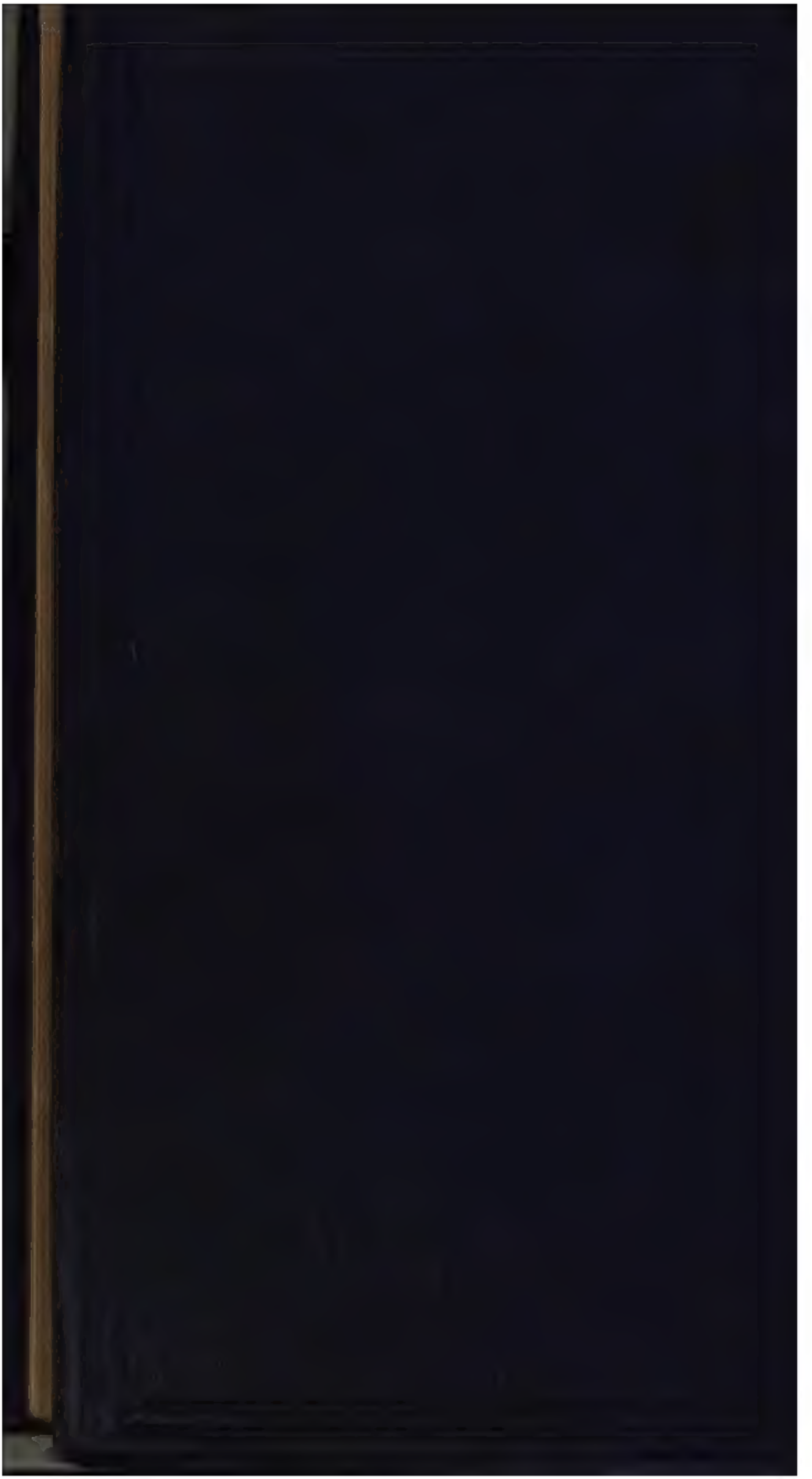
short space, if His people will work willingly under Him. But mark one thing, my brethren; such late converts as we are speaking of, if they be **true converts**, never forgive themselves for not having repented sooner. They go on all the remainder of their lives, humbling themselves and doing penance in their hearts. Ask one of them, whether he thinks you may safely put off your repentance, and he will tell you that he, for his part, would give worlds to have repented sooner.

My dear brethren, be not hard-hearted, do not turn a deaf ear to your Saviour, when He is teaching you the only way to make up, if so be, for lost time. As yet, though the time is very short, there *is* time to learn to pray in earnest, "Spare me a little, that I may recover my strength: before I go hence and be no more seen." But the hours are speeding on: sooner, far sooner than you can now imagine, you will have to "go hence and be no more seen," and if you have not learned the saving prayer then, it will be too late to learn it afterwards.

Spare us, Good Lord,

whom Thou hast redeemed with Thy most precious Blood;

And be not angry with us for ever.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